MURDER in the VATICAN

American, Russian and Papal Plots

By AVRO MANHATTAN

THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE VATICAN IN WORLD POLITIC

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By Avro Manhattan

FIRST EDITION

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Published by
OZARK BOOKS
Box 3703
Springfield, MO 65808

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 85-62635
Printed in the United States of America

Foreword

Most contents in this book are controversial. Indeed, sensational. Some can even defy credibility.

Yet the successful and attempted assassinations of contemporary Popes, are historical realities.

The intrigues of the KGB and of the CIA, have been and are still no less concrete. Their masterminding of villainous operations, colossal financial scandals and of diplomatic blackmail, created and destroyed papal candidatures, to the detriment of their rivals, and of the Vatican itself.

The murder of Popes, Cardinals, of diplomats and of financiers, carried out by the USA and by the Soviet Union, during and after each papal election, are not speculations. They are facts.

The evidence that the KGB and the CIA have influenced the election of the last three Popes, is also overwhelming.

The KGB and the CIA, have plotted, counterplotted, bribed, blackmailed and even murdered to reach their objectives. Vatican misdeeds and equivocal operations, have been suppressed with threats of death, and by death. Also with executions by hanging, like that of Calvi the God's Banker, under a London bridge, England: with poison like that administered to Pope John Paul I in his own apartment: with attempted shooting, like that against Pope John Paul II, in St. Peter's Square, Rome.

Equally by artificially induced heart attacks, such as those suffered by three key Cardinals, who died, because they knew too much. This without mentioning the people killed, because of their involvement with the financial scandals of the missing 1,400 million dollars from the Vatican Bank.

The tale is one of dreadful mounting horrors. The more horrifying, since they are all factual, verifiable, contemporary and up to date.

The political background is no less startling. The secret and open interference of Stalin and of Hitler, no less than that of the

two major superpowers to influence Vatican policies, even more so.

Their operations meant at promoting a pro-Nazi or a pro-Russian or a pro-American Pope, are as much a revelation, as they are shocking.

The Vatican policies, therefore, should be assessed with diligence. Since, as a superpower, on a par with Russia and the USA, it can help to spell peace or war. And thus affect us all.

Avro Manhattan

London, England

Chapter One

THE VATICAN AS A WORLD SUPERPOWER

Personal role of the Pope

The Vatican is a superpower. On a par with the USA and Soviet Russia. Indeed, since at times it can act as a formulator of the policies of both, it can be reckoned as the paramount superpower of our times.

Its adherents, a massive portion of mankind, nearing a billion, can be made to operate in every corner of the world. Sixty million within the USA herself.

This is done via religion. Since the religious credence of individuals cannot be assessed in terms of political, economic and military parlance, the Vatican's might, appears unreal and insubstantial. Behind its intangibility, however, its power is real, tangible and concrete.

For its potential hostility or support can benefit, neutralize, or damage the world strategies of both the Soviet Union or of the USA. Indeed it can destabilize the political and military balance of both.

This is so, since the Vatican has a world strategy, world objectives and world interests inter-twining with those of its two rivals.

And since its global operations can either harmonize or can oppose those of the USA and or Russia, it follows that more often than not, it is convenient for them to coordinate theirs with those of the Vatican.

When seen in this light, therefore, the Vatican is a superpower in its own right. Indeed, because of its duality as a political and as a religious centre, it can outbid the other two.

Such duality, makes the Vatican a most dangerous ally. Or a most dangerous enemy: or both. Hence the necessity for each

superpower, to cultivate its friendship; and hence the friendship of those running its policies, beginning with that of the Pope.

The Vatican's immense power derives from the religion it represents. That is, from the spiritual and ecclesiastic potency of the Catholic Church. Besides its monolithic belief, the numerical strength of the Catholic religion, is politically impressive.

Thus, whereas, the USA has a mere 250 million citizens and the Soviet Union about 300 million, the Vatican, via the Catholic Church, can influence, between 800 and 1000 million Catholics.

These, unlike the citizens of the other two superpowers, who are strictly confined within physical and political barriers, have no frontiers whatsoever. They are posted within the USA, Soviet Russia, and within hundreds of other countries, and can be made to operate, independently of their own administrations, governments or regimes.

A Catholic citizen, therefore, owing to the fact that he is a member of the Catholic Church, can and often is influenced in his social and ideological attitudes by those taken by the Vatican, acting as the political facet of the Catholic Church.

It cannot be otherwise. Since Catholics, notwithstanding their disclaimer, are affected directly, tangently, by the Vatican's political stance in the belief that such stance, is that of the Catholic Church.

Because of such considerations, therefore, it is imperative that the two superpowers be vigilant as to whom will be put at the helm of the Catholic Church. Which, when seen politically, spells the Vatican. That is, ultimately, the Pope. Hence the importance of having the Pope as a partner in the pursuance of any given world policy.

Since Vatican policies are directed by the Pope, the importance of the Pope's personality is not only basic; it is the ultimate factor in determining the world strategies of both the Vatican, and of the Catholic Church.

It cannot be otherwise. Since the Pope is the head of a diplomatic machinery operating globally; also, within the very territories of the two world superpowers. Thanks to that, he can influence the internal and external policies of both. This he can do, by supporting one against the other. Or vice versa. Like for in-

stance, when the Pope decided to support the USA, against Soviet Russia, after the Second World War, in the fifties. And later on, when another Pope, supported Soviet Russia against the USA in the sixties and seventies with his formation of the Vatican Moscow Alliance. (1)

The Pope can do this at will and according to his personal decisions. It must be remembered that the Pope has neither Parliament, Congress or Senate, or any similar democratic body, restraining, containing or limiting his decisions, powers or policies. He is an absolute autocratic ruler, in the fullest meaning of that word.

Autocracy means uncontrolled exercise of power. The Pope, therefore, being theoretically and a de facto, an autocrat, can conceive, and carry out policies at will, in accordance with his personal whim, will and judgement.

Hence, the importance, for both superpowers to have the Pope as a friendly partner, and the importance for both of them, to ensure that after a Pope has died, the next one be a friendly individual.

Hence the necessity of each superpower to exercise whatever influence it can exert upon the promotion and final election of the right cardinal to the throne of St. Peter.

Since from the choice of the right or of the wrong man, there will depend the formulation of policies, affecting those of each superpower, and hence the maintenance of the balance of global strategy, upon which there will depend the peace of the world.

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(1) For more details, about the Cold War promoted by the USA and the Vatican, also about the Vatican Moscow Alliance, see the author's *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance.* (Chick Publications 1982-5)

Chapter Two

Vatican's flirtation with Lenin. Its support of Fascism. A pro-Fascist Pope's repentance. His "suspicious" demise. Papal candidature of a pro-Nazi Cardinal.

After World War I the most spectacular political event was the rise of Bolshevism and the birth of the Soviet Russia.

The two, provoked the appearance of Fascism; that of Fascist Italy and that of Nazi Germany. Two ideological creatures, which were to tear apart first Europe and then the rest of the world, with the outbreak of World War II.

Since Bolshevism declared unrestricted war against religion, the Catholic Church opposed it as an ideology from its beginning.

When, therefore, Fascism first appeared in Europe, posing as the natural enemy of Communism, the Vatican welcomed it, as an ally. The two became partners. Not so much because the Vatican approved of Fascism as such, but because Fascism, seemed to be the only instrument via which to contain Communism at home and abroad.

The Vatican, which at first had been secretly flirting with Lenin, to replace the persecuted Russian Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church within Communist Russia, as we shall see presently, when the Lenin-Pope negotiations collapsed declared open war on both International Bolshevism and Soviet Russia.

Pope Pius XI, threatened by the rapid progress of Bolshevism in Italy and Europe, welcomed the appearance of Fascism, as the political weapon via which to oppose the red tide as represented by the Marxist ideology, and Soviet Russia.

In his belief that Fascism would help to stop the menacing red tide, he went so far as to declare that the Father of Fascism, Mussolini, was "the man sent by Divine Providence" to save the Church and mankind from the Red Peril.

The result of such papal attitude was that both the Catholic Church and the Vatican became theoretically and de facto supporters of the Fascist ideology, wherever it appeared, as long as it opposed Soviet Russia.

The Vatican Fascist Alliance, in due course, became a real partnership. A concrete ideological cooperation which helped to shape the rest of Europe between the first and the outbreak of the second world war.

The decision of the Vatican to support Fascism, to counter-oppose Bolshevism, and Soviet Russia, had been the personal decision of Pope Pius XI. The ultimate decision had been his. Right or wrong, it would have been implemented even if all the Cardinals were opposed to it.

It could not have been otherwise. Since, as already said, the Pope, as a Pope, has no-one above him and cannot be thwarted in his personal decisions.

Pope autocracy being what it is, therefore, is the paramount factor which determines the nature, objectives and prosecution of the policies of the Vatican.

Since these are formulated by the judgement, political views and personal bias of the Pope, the importance of having the right man, as a Pope, is more than evident. It becomes a factor of capital importance, with any nation which has to deal with the Vatican as a centre of diplomatic and political influence.

Hence the turmoil, which affected Europe in the past whenever the death of the reigning Pope preceded the election of a new pontiff. The right new Pope, or the wrong new Pope, could, and did, help or ruin, the policies of many nations, according to which side the new Pope had or had not sided.

Pope Pius XI, for instance, after having supported Fascism in Italy, having seen in Fascism an anti-Marxist movement, after some years, changed his mind. The rise of Nazi Germany, turned European Fascism into a menace as destructive as Bolshevism itself.

When Nazi Germany turned increasingly aggressive, realizing that it was leading to war, Pope Pius XI decided that the Fascist ideology having become as dangerous as Marxism, should be opposed as he had originally opposed the latter.

After reaching this conclusion, he decided to condemn Fascist Nazism. To that effect, he set out to write a document, in which he told all Catholics to withdraw their support for Fascism in Italy, and Nazism in Germany.

The papal condemnation of both would have had a tremendous impact upon the whole of Europe. Indeed, would have compelled Hitler and Mussolini to change their plans for the launching of the second World War.

The publication of Pope Pius XI's anti-Nazi document was prevented by the "untimely" or rather, "providential" death of Pius XI, as we shall see presently.

The importance of who should succeed him at this stage, in 1939, months before the outbreak of World War II, was enormous. Since, the influence of the Vatican would have been paramount in determining which side the Vatican would have taken in the days to come.

The decision of the Vatican could have tipped the balance of power, one side or the other, that is on the side of the Fascist Block, or on the side of the anti-Fascist one, the Catholic Church, with her hundreds of millions of Catholics, all over Europe, would have helped to tip the balance either way.

The Vatican, in short, would have become a fundamental factor in determining which path Europe was going to take.

The "suspicious" death of Pius XI, whose timely "demise" could have transformed the political alliance of the Vatican towards Nazism, in the eyes of those who wished the Vatican to continue to support Nazi Germany, had been "providential." Had Pope Pius XI, succeeded in officially condemning Nazism and Fascism, as he had intended to do with his secret letter, the Fascist-Nazi Axis, in all probability, would have not only hesitated but might also have avoided altogether to pursue the aggressive policies they did. Since the millions of Catholics inside Italy, Germany and Austria, might have become effective opponents of both regimes, as the enemies within. It became a dire necessity for both Hitler and Mussolini, therefore, to avoid such a catastrophe.

Its avoidance necessitated the disappearance of the Pope. Since the continuation of the Vatican policy of support for

Fascism had to be maintained at all cost at that particular juncture.

The right man, therefore, had to be ready for the right task. The eyes of the two Fascist partners had been focused upon him for years. His references had been impeccable. A diplomatic career in Germany long before the rise of Hitler; his use of the Catholic Party to propel Hitler into power back in 1933. This was done legally, via a democratic election and via the skillful use of the Catholic Party of Germany.

His name was Cardinal Pacelli, the Papal Nuncio to Berlin, later Secretary of State to Pope Pius XI. Pacelli, a fanatical anti-communist had been groomed for the task of succeeding Pius XI, since then.

When Pius XI's stance turned openly hostile to Nazi Germany, his candidature to the Papacy became a possibility. His personal friendship with Hitler's predecessor, Chancellor Franz von Papen, leader of the Catholic Party of Germany, made Pacelli's candidature a certainty, the more so, since Pacelli had the endorsement of all the Cardinals of Germany and Austria.

When Hitler won the elections with the help of the Catholic Party of Germany, led by Pacelli and von Papen, and became Germany's Chancellor, on 30th January 1933, Hitler made von Papen, Vice-Chancellor of Nazi Germany.

Cardinal Pacelli, could not have had better credentials for the nomination to the Papacy at the forthcoming Conclave, in 1939, from which, in fact, he emerged as Pope Pius XII.

A fatal election. Since from then onwards, the Vatican pursued open and secret alliance with Fascist Europe directed at the total annihilation of Marxism, and therefore, of Soviet Russia.

FOOTNOTE: For a detailed description of Vatican help given to promote the rise of Hitler, and the part played by the Catholic Party of Germany, see the author's *The Vatican in World Politics.* 440 printed pages. 12th Edition. Gaer Inc. New York. 1952

Chapter Three

Secret moves for the election of a Pro-Nazi Pope, before World War II.

The swift working of the conclave which elected Cardinal Pacelli indicated how the preliminary moves had been carried out well in advance of the death of the repentant Pope Pius XI.

The election had been neither the work of the Holy Ghost, nor the collective desire of the Sacred College, and even less the accidental formulation of the College itself. It had been the result of a well calculated operational strategy of a master mind, which had planned it, years before. The strategy had been accelerated by Pius XI's repentance. That is, by Pius XI's determination to warn the Catholic world of the danger of Nazism.

The Papal change of mind had spelt a most dramatic ideological revolution. It meant that Catholics should no longer support Fascism and Nazism, as many of them had done until then.

Had Pope Pius XI's warning been officially published, as he had intended it to be, the result would have been incalculable. It would have given the death blow to the Nazi programme of territorial expansionism. Indeed, to the Nazi determination to go to war.

The master plan was made to operate to prevent such political disaster. In other words, the death of Pope Pius XI, was "accelerated"—his "demise" artificially induced. Such accusations have never been documented, proved and even less substantiated. But the suspicions, and the speculations, as we shall see presently, are well grounded.

The justification, to carry out the operation, that is, the prevention of the papal condemnation of Nazism which had necessitated the physical "demise" of Pope Pius XI, had become urgent and concrete with the approaching outbreak of the war.

For Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the maintenance of the Vatican's tacit support was paramount. Indeed, it was vital. If the price to pay for its continuation was the thwarting of the will of

the Pope and even the potential acceleration of his death, then the price was well worth paying.

Better for a man to die, than for a whole people, or regime, or ideology to perish—the historical cry, for the justification of uncountable political crimes, throughout history, past and present, as typified by the condemnation of Christ himself.

Cardinals are bribable. And like lay politicians, are liable to personal, financial or ideological pressure. When to them, there are added religious convictions, whether genuine or not, then their consensus will operate in favour of any given papal candidate who can offer the best chance for individual promotions or of ideological and religious fulfilment.

In the case of Cardinal Pacelli, the Cardinal electors, prior to and during the Conclave, saw in him a man, who had helped the right ideology, namely Nazism, to get into power, with the objective of opposing the most vigorous enemy of the Church, namely World Communism and its embodiment, Soviet Russia.

It was logical, therefore, for those who thought on these lines, to vote for such a Cardinal. Many electors had been influenced also by national and even regional consideration.

In the cases of many German, Italian and Spanish Cardinals, pressure from their own governments, all Fascist ones, had been irresistible. They had to give a positive response. That meant the support for the papal candidature of a Cardinal who had supported the policies of Nazi Germany, of Fascist Italy and of Franco's Spain. In short, of a Cardinal, who, if elected Pope, would have maintained the Alliance of the Vatican with Fascism.

The result of such collective pressure eventually produced what their promoters wanted. The election of the Pope they had envisaged, since Pius XI had begun to withdraw his support for Fascism. Cardinal Pacelli, was elected Pope only a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Pope Pius XII once elected not only maintained the initial alliance with Fascism, which Pius XI had, when he called Mussolini, "the man sent by Divine Providence," but actually strengthened it. His enhanced support of the tacit Vatican Fascist Alliance, encouraged Hitler and Mussolini to proceed at an ever accelerated pace with their plans of futher conquests.

That is, with their determination to go to war.

With the outbreak of the hostilities, the Vatican pursued a policy of "neutrality." Pius XII maintained a very dubious stance with both belligerents. Although his conduct with them was, to say the least, an equivocal one, officially he had to remain "neutral" for the sake of the millions of Catholics to be found on both sides of the conflict.

The reality of the matter, however, was otherwise. Since, Hitler considered the Vatican an unwilling supporter of the Axis, because of the Pope's fanatical opposition against Soviet Russia; it was the common denominator, which united willy-nilly Hitler and Pope, in the pursuance of a common objective; the destruction of Soviet Russia.

The importance of Pius XII's anti-communist stance had been paramount not only to Hitler, during the hostilities, but also, to the future strategy of a post-war USA, when the USA found herself in open conflict with an expansionistic Soviet Russia.

Russian territorial and ideological expansionism made an alliance of the USA with the Vatican a dire necessity, since such an alliance, mobilized the whole of the Catholic Church on the side of America. Or at least, against Soviet Russia.

The Vatican-USA Alliance, eventually consolidated, into what the present author called, the Vatican Washington Alliance; a political formulation that played an increasingly prominent role in the decades to come. Thanks to such Vatican-USA formula, the Pope supported the USA full tilt during various USA ideological and even military operations. Indeed, he helped to father the Cold War, in cooperation with the USA's fanatical Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

In the fifties, the by-product of the Cold War, stimulated by Stalin's intransigence, threatened to escalate into a hot war. During the Korean conflict, in fact, the Korean War had been on the brink of an open nuclear disaster, as testified by President Truman himself. (1)

The intrigues which had been engineered prior to and during the Conclave, which had followed the death of Pope Pius XI, thus had proved to have been amply justified. Since, by electing the right Pope, or rather by helping to promote him, the original

formulators of a Pro-Pius XII had unwillingly elected a Pope, who, because of his anti-communist stance after the Second World War, helped with the creation of a Vatican-USA anti-communist anti-Russian front.

The Vatican-USA anti-communist front, in the event, became the pivot of the USA grand strategy in her opposition against an expanding Soviet Russia. The American-Vatican anti-communist stance had become a political factor because of the personal anti-communist bias of two men: that of John Foster Dulles, for the USA, and that of Pope Pius XII, for the Vatican. The common denominator which had cemented their cooperation had been their personal belief that Communism was a menace as great as the policies of the Soviet Union. Their personal belief had been so vigorous that while John Foster Dulles had been prepared to use the atom bomb during the Korean conflict, Pope Pius XII had used the equivalent in the religious field by ex-communicating all Catholics who had dared to support communism in any shape or form.

When seen retrospectively therefore, the election of the right Pope at the right time, immediately before World War II, had served not only the Fascist dictators well. By a quirk of history, namely the defeat of the Axis Powers, it had helped towards the formulation of an after-war world strategy favourable to the anti-communist stance advocated by the victorious USA.

The joint Vatican-USA grand anti-communist strategy inspired by the personal anti-communist belief of Pope Pius XII, thus, helped to shape the post war world during more than two decades. Had another, less flexible, and less ideologically astute Pope, been elected in 1939, the political operations of the Vatican's grand strategies perhaps would have taken the opposite direction. The results of the policies of a hostile Pope to the grand policies of a post-war America, might have been fundamentally disastrous. Indeed, might have helped to distort the course of history, for Europe, for the USA, and for the world.

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(1) For more details about the USA readiness to drop the atom bomb, during the Korean War, and President Truman's comment about it, see the author's *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance.* Chick Publications 1983.

Chapter Four

Revolution in the Vatican. Preliminary first steps for a radical demolition of the Vatican-Washington Alliance.

The Vatican-Washington Alliance, which had been initiated during the second World War in 1943-44, when Pius XII sided "secretly" with the victorious allies, ended with Pius XII's death in 1958. It survived the fear of the Cold War, fathered by Pius XII and John Foster Dulles, creators of the Vatican Washington Alliance.

The close relationship of the Vatican with the USA had disturbed many Catholics, many of whom had disapproved of the seeming duality of the Alliance, and even more, of growing involvement of the Vatican with the anti-Russian belligerancy of the USA, since the USA's grand strategy it was said, was involving the Vatican into ever deeper waters, and the potential of a nuclear conflict with the Communist world.

The fears expressed within and outside the Vatican were dismissed as cowardice by Pius XII, who never listened to any advice, with the exception of that of John Foster Dulles and of Cardinal Spellman. Pius XII suffered no criticism, took no advice and came even to believe he was almost infallible in matters of politics. Indeed, he became convinced that Christ himself approved of what he was doing in his anti-communist crusade.(1) His political fanaticism, while appreciated by the USA, created a growing reaction everywhere in the Catholic world; since Soviet Russia, the main war ally of the USA, during the anti-Hitler war, was still popular with the postwar nations.

Reaction grew inside and outside the Vatican and within and outside the Church. The Vatican-USA instigation of the Cold War in the fifties did the rest. Prelates and Cardinals became restless. One of these was a diplomat who had been operating in the back water of the near east. Based in Constantinople, he had been deal-

ing mainly with the Orthodox Church. His gift for understanding was exceptional, his popularity with Catholics and non-Catholics alike even more so. In the political field he was easy going, and above all, tolerant. He befriended socialists, Communists, Christians and non-Christians alike. He was known for his sympathy for the workers, and the peasants: when Pope Pius XII banned the priest-workers in France and Belgium, the Prelate openly criticized him and said it had been a mistake. Notwithstanding that, or because of it, the Prelate, Msgr. Roncalli, eventually was called back to the west. Thanks to his reputation for negotiations, he was sent to post-war France. There, the Vatican had a serious problem to solve, with General de Gaulle, the new head of liberated France, and with the French Communist party.

De Gaulle refused to forgive the Church for its tacit collaboration with the Nazis: the Communists refused to cooperate with the Church, for the same reason. The two problems seemed insolvable. Nuncio Roncalli dealt with both. And to the surprise and delight of Pius XII no less than of those who opposed Pius XII's policies, he managed to persuade de Gaulle and the French Communist party to come to an accommodation with the Vatican. It was a triumph, which had been the more remarkable, because it had been unexpected.

Msgr. Roncalli's popularity knew no bounds; the more so, because he had dared, and dared still, to criticize the Pope's anti-communist stance. Msgr. Roncalli had three qualifications which distinguished him from the other minor diplomats. He was immensely popular with the Communists of France and of Europe. He had dared to criticize the Pope: and was known to sympathize with Russia.

Indeed, he had become an expert in the relations of the Catholic Church with the Russian Orthodox Church. That meant, that he was also popular in Russia, and that therefore, he was looked upon in a favourable light by the Soviet authorities.

This had become so, since the Kremlin, at last had come to realize that the political stance of Pius XII, was not a mere abstract papal interference in the political life of Europe. But on the contrary, it had become the pillar of the anti-Russian strategy of the USA itself. As demonstrated by the Vatican-USA joint

launching of the Cold War.

Since rumor had it that the Pope was suffering some undisclosed ailment, the possibility of his demise, became a serious probability. The result was inevitable; who would or could succeed him? People within and outside the Vatican, no less than in Moscow, began to scan the ecclesiastical horizon, and search for a potential candidate. The factions were split. In the Sacred College of Cardinals, there were two well divided parties; the arch-conservative and the liberals. The latter looked at the former Papal Nuncio in Paris, Msgr. Roncalli's supporters grew. His popularity increased, beyond his diplomatic status, not only amidst the discontents in Rome, or in Italy, but also in France. The French bishops, who had been saved from the ire of the French Communists, who had accused them of collaboration with the occupying Nazis during the war, supported Msgr. Roncalli, full tilt. The French Cardinals, who had come to terms with the French Communists, looked upon Roncalli as their champion. And although the diplomatic status of Msgr. Roncalli gave him minimal ecclesiastical importance inside the Vatican, nevertheless, the hope that one day the Nuncio might climb the ecclesiastical ladder, and thus might influence the Vatican from within, grew daily in Paris as well as in Rome. The fact, that he dared to criticize the anti-Communist stance of the Pope, beginning with the Pope's close alliance with anti-Russian USA, made him increasingly the focus of an anti-Pius movement.

Pope Pius XII, sensed the danger. He waited until Msgr. Roncalli had finalized his double mission in Paris, thereupon, since Roncalli's popularity grew more rapidly than ever, he decided, to demolish him.

He did this, by posting him to one of the backwaters of Italy—Venice. A place, where if millions of tourists came to see the gondolas, the ideological problems were unknown and certainly could not influence anything in Rome, or Paris.

But if the Patriarch of Venice, seemed to be resigned to end his career and perhaps his life in Venice, many who had known him and who had remembered him in the context of his work for the reconciliation of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, also of his success with the French Communist

party, with the Catholic hierarchy and with a hostile de Gaulle, remembered him more vividly than ever. Amongst these were many European left wing movements, most of which had resented Pius XII's excommunication of their supporters.

Millions of Catholics and non-Catholics alike longed for a change of direction from the Vatican. The change however, could not be carried out since the Pope was there for life. His personal fanaticism had become the official policy of the Church. Many inside and outside Rome could do nothing, but hope for the natural disappearance of Pius XII. That, however, might have taken years. Years meant the prosecution of the Vatican-Washington Alliance, with its implementation of the Cold War, which was endangering ever more, the peace of the world.

Most Cardinals, in Rome and elsewhere, became restless. The more so, since, the Russians had turned Eastern Europe into a Communist satrapy, and the serried Russian armed forces had been mobilized against Western Europe.

The USA and their war allies counteracted by displaying theirs. The escalation, was becoming ever more dangerous on both sides. The Vatican went on playing the major ideological role in the oncoming confrontation.

Its interference had become ever more a political reality. Not only in Washington, where the Vatican Washington Alliance, was in full swing; but also in Moscow. There, the Kremlin had started to appreciate the role which the Vatican was playing in the shaping of postwar Europe. And hence the importance, the man, that is the Pope, who was directing the Vatican's grand strategy, had in the formulation of the East-West contest. That is, in his personally influencing the policy of the USA against Soviet Russia.

But if the realization of the influence of the Vatican, had come during the Cold War, Stalin having realized the importance of the operations of the Vatican in the rise and fall of Hitler, also of the Vatican's power to shape the post-war political face of Europe, had begun his first cautious moves, directed at forestalling further anti-Russian operations from the Vatican itself.

Although preoccupied with the USA, he did so by planning to influence the forthcoming choice of the new Pope from within

the ranks of the Cardinal electors themselves, once Pius XII had died.

The ideal place from which to influence the election of a new pontiff, was in the future Conclave. An opinion fully shared by the USA, which had also been preparing for the same event.

(1) See the author's *Vietnam: Why Did We Go?* Chick Publications, 1984.

Chapter Five

Stalin's preparatory moves to influence the election of a pro-communist Pope. Intrigues, diplomacy and Cardinal's plots.

The launching of the Cold War had forced Stalin to the realization that the Vatican, although representing a Church, when it came to the formulation of dangerous ideological grand strategies, had become a major power-house of world politics. A fact which had made it a superpower in its own right, on a par with the USA and Soviet Russia.

Ex-seminarist Stalin's cynicism about the Pope during World War II, when he had inquired sarcastically how many battalions the Pope could put into the field, by now was a thing of the past.

Stalin had learned his lesson. In Eastern Europe, Catholics were giving him continuous trouble. In Western Europe, the newly-created Christian Democracy had set up major anti-Communist governments. Moreover, as far as the Cold War was concerned, Stalin knew that one of its chief promoters was none other than Pius XII himself.

It became obvious to the Kremlin strategists that the Vatican deserved not only careful attention, but unusual treatment as the diplomatic weapon of a religion with political muscle.

Men, whether they be Communist Commisars or Catholic Cardinals, cannot entirely discard their individual likes and dislikes, or minimize their weaknesses and preferences.

Stalin, who had dealt personally with thousands of people, whom he had elevated to great political heights or sent to be executed, was a master analyst of human behaviour. He applied the same rules vis-a-vis the situation at the Vatican that he had so successfully followed in dealing with secular political power centres. Not those in which he had applied brute force, to be sure, but those where cunning had been most effective. What was re-

quired for combatting an amorphous, widespread menace such as the anti-Communism of the Vatican, was a similarly intangible weapon, one as invisible as a spider's web, and as deadly.

Accordingly, Stalin prepared for the actual demise of the Pope—nothing less, nothing more. Since the Catholic anti-Russian crusade emanated chiefly from the personal convictions of Pius XII, he reasoned, it should be possible to neutralize such anti-Communist virulence by the replacement of Pius XII with a Pope whose personal beliefs were the opposite.

The success of such a policy, of course, depended upon the election of a new pontiff who would be ready and willing to dismantle the structure Pius had built over three decades and to replace it with one of a political character more favourable to Communism. On the face of it, Stalin's objective was an impossible one. Only direct divine intervention could work such a miracle.

Former seminary student Stalin, however, although a professional atheist, was well versed in theological thinking. His dealings with the Orthodox Church had taught him that ecclesiastics, high or low, have their personal opinions about political problems. Through the skillful manipulation of its clerical roster, for example, the Orthodox Church—once the sworn enemy of Communism—had now become an ally.

The Orthodox hierarchy had faced the political reality, not only that Russian Communism was there to stay, but also that Christianity could be interpreted as being nearer to Communism than the traditional capitalist teaching of the Gospels had made it appear.

Stalin well knew that in the West there were pockets of Catholic clergy who were Communist sympathizers. Also, that large sections of Catholic workers and, indeed, of Catholic social movements, had their Marxist advocates.

These elements had always disapproved of Pius XII's anti-Communist activities, the more so since such policies dove-tailed with those of the United States, whom they had been taught to regard as the fountain-head of imperialism. Inside the Vatican itself, there were some who had experienced the same war jitters as the average man in the various cities of Europe.

In addition to such considerations, Stalin had processed certain information not available even to traditional diplomacy. In other words, if the Pope had his agents in Washington, Stalin had his own informants inside the Vatican.

These were not the kind of agents so typical of the antediluvian Comintern and its related spy agencies. They were the very cream of the Kremlin's special elite.

Although a ruthless pragmatist, Stalin held un-Marxist beliefs concerning the irrationality of human behaviour. Also in the potency of deeply-held religious or ideological convictions.

These, if adroitly employed, could work miracles. Additional information about the opinions, personal habits, physical dispositions and monumental minutiae of certain individuals could do the rest.

Such information had been collected from all over the Catholic world. The world's number one Catholic, Pius XII, being the main target, yielded the most. His visions and mystical visitations were as familiar to Stalin as they were to the editor of the *Osservatore Romano*, or to the Cardinal confidantes who made them known to the world.

Back in 1948 and 1949, for instance, when Pius XII was fulminating against anyone who wished to vote for the Communists in the general elections of Italy and France, Stalin knew that the Pope was planning to proclaim a new dogma.

Piety and propaganda

But more significantly, he was aware that some Cardinals were firmly opposed to it, on religious as well as political grounds. As noted previously, the new dogma—the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary—had been an act of piety on the part of Pius XII, but served at the same time as a focus of political propaganda, as was his subsequent experience of the Fatima phenomenon.

Stalin, the materialist, regarded these manisfestations as indications of physical and psychological ailments, as clearly shown by the fact that following such visions the Pope became the prey of fits of depression. These, Stalin was told, were relieved by an ever-increasing dose of drugs, some of which were considered dangerous.

It was even rumoured (although the rumours were never confirmed) that certain doctors, in their eagerness to ameliorate his distress, had administered overdoses of tranquillizers. The files of the Kremlin, no less than those of the CIA, contain accurate details about these developments. They were of immense political significance because they directly influenced the Pope's decisions concerning diplomatic and political matters of grave importance.

Years later, it was reported that these periods of depression developed into veritable illness which, besides causing acute pain and recurrent discomfort were thought to be the cause of mystical experiences of various kinds.

In 1955, for example, during one of his serious illnesses, Pius claimed to have been visited by Christ in person. "He saw the Lord close to him, silent in all his eloquent majesty." And later, according to the *Corriere della Sera*, Italy's largest newspaper, the Holy Father also heard "the true and distinct voice of Christ."

In Stalin's way of looking at things, such experiences indicated that the Pope's health was failing. In political terms, this meant that once Pius had passed from the scene, his anti-Communist crusade would come to a halt, or at least ameliorate.

The selection of a new Pope would then assume a far-reaching significance, not only to the Church, but also to Washington and to Moscow.

The papal elections in 1939, on the eve of World War II, had not been forgotten, the missing papal testament even less. The Conclave of 1939 had, in a sense, been a farce, a triumph of "reactionary" forces of European and American right-wing elements. Middle-of-the-way Cardinals did not have a chance. The most *papabile* of them, for example,—Cardinal Dalla Costa, Archbishop of Florence—had been defeated almost at once, although many had expected him to be elected.

The coming papal election, Stalin reflected, had to be planned in a more satisfactory way. That meant long-range lobbying, both within and outside the Vatican. The most acceptable papal candidate had to have a well-defined personality; possess the right kind of ideological bias that would have the approval of the "progressive" forces inside the Church; and be potentially attrac-

tive to a vigourous group of activists within the Roman hierarchy itself.

Candidates, known and unknown, had been carefully monitored and nursed since the end of World War I. One or two of the more desirable had managed to infiltrate the Catholic Parties, but then had vanished without leaving a trace. During and after World War II, however, several individuals had seemed to make their mark, and were duly noticed. The three names which headed the list in Rome, Washington and—above all—in Moscow, were those of Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini, the red pro-Secretary of State; Msgr. Gregory Agagianian, Patriarch of the Catholic Rite of the Armenian Church; and Msgr. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, diplomat and intelligence agent for many years in the Middle East.

Msgr. Agagianian had become noteworthy before World War II when Pope Pius XI, after his disillusionment with Hitler, had elevated him to the Patriarchate in 1937, a post which he held for 25 years thereafter.

In 1946, anti-Communist Pope Pius XII made him a Cardinal. This was at the start of the Cold War. At the time, the appointment raised many eyebrows in Washington and in Rome. The fact was that the move was a longrange one. Cardinal Agagianian was expected to play a major role during the developing Cold War and afterward, once Russia had been invaded or, at least, Eastern Europe had been liberated from Russian occupation.

The reason was that Agagianian was the top expert on the Soviet Union, Communism, and the Orthodox Church; a brilliant scholar and a devious diplomat. In addition to such qualifications, he had others no less interesting in the eyes of those who intended to use him for implementing their political plans.

He was of Armenian origin, but a Georgian by birth. He had known Communism at first hand, having lived three difficult years as a young priest in Tiflis, Georgia, whilest the Bolshevist Revolution was raging. He spoke fluent Russian, and was considered a very special Russian by the Russians themselves.

Agagianian was also considered very special by Stalin himself, the Cardinal having had the dubious distinction of attending the same Jesuit seminary in Georgia as Stalin had

done. This was a small, but significant, fact, since Georgian Stalin had an extraordinary weakness for anyone born in Georgia.

Pius XII's successor, John XXIII, appointed Agagianian Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of the People in 1960, intending to woo the Soviets through the Russian-born Cardinal.

Stalin's predilection for Agagianian proved to be the Cardinal's undoing, however, since several cardinals feared that Stalin's patronage might turn into a political liability.

Their apprehension proved to be well-founded even after Stalin's death. At the conclave of 1958, which elected the first pink pope, John XXIII, and even at the succeeding one which elected the first socialist pope, Paul VI, Agagianian's star suffered a sharp decline because of Stalin's past distant patronage.

That Agagianian had been a serious candidate for the papacy was due not so much to the fact that the progressive and pro-Russian elements within the Church took his candidature for granted, but that he was personally very popular with all the cardinals. This to such an extent that during the two conclaves of 1958 and 1963, he was frequently greatly embarrassed when the people in Rome, upon meeting him, shouted: "Long live the Pope!" as he passed.

The fact that he was Georgian-born, that he had attended the same seminary as Stalin, that he was known for his expertise in Russian and Communist problems, and that the Communists in Russia and Italy like him, all were indicative that the general opinion was favourable for a radical reorientation of the Roman Catholic Church towards the left.

Although Agagianian had been a favorite ideological candidate of Stalin, nevertheless, the Russian dictator, prior to his death had reached the conclusion that Agagianian's election to the papacy might do more harm than good, since the break could have caused great alarm in the Catholic world, not to say in the United States. A softer approach was considered to be more diplomatic. This meant that, ironically, Agagianian was discarded for the very reasons which had made him such an ideal papal candidate. A Russian-born, Russian-speaking, Russian-educated Pope would have created embarrassment for those who were

seeking a smooth Vatican realignment.

A candidate with the traditional qualifications—European, Italian, and mildly progressive—had better chances to guide the Church towards a pro-Communist policy.

And so it was that Kremlin eyes turned towards two candidates who best qualified for a progressive new papacy, namely, the Monsignori Roncalli and Montini.

Chapter Six

Stalin supports a pro-communist Pope. His election. The "Little Vatican" of New York and USA Intelligence. The golden USA-Vatican era is closed.

Stalin's perspicacity had proved right. Agagianian, although personally popular in Rome, when rumours had it that he might become Pope under the auspices of the Kremlin was considered too obvious a Trojan horse for the Russians.

Because of it, his fortune declined as fast as it had risen. So much so, that even the communists of Italy, had come to disapprove of his papal ambitions.

Candidates nearer home became the object of papal speculations. As the secret revolt against Pius XII gathered momentum, the forces preparing for the succession were coordinating their plan for the election of the future Pope.

The new Pope, in their view had to be Italian; had to be popular with the left, broadminded, tolerant, and, above all, had to be willing to begin a "dialogue" with communism, at home and abroad. Above all, he had to detach the Vatican from the political bonds with the USA.

Many cardinals, proposed a list of names, headed by Msgr. Roncalli. In France the French Cardinals spoke openly in his favor as did several others in Latin America. In Russia itself his potential candidature, was welcomed, and indeed promoted by the Orthodox prelates, and even by certain diplomats.

Stalin's preference was for Roncalli, ever since his name was brought to his notice by the French Communists. Thorez, the French Communist leader, who had dealt personally with Roncalli when the latter had been sent to France to appease de Gaulle, gave a glowing report to the Kremlin about him. He was the ideal prelate, he reported. He underestood Marxism like a Marxist; he had no hard feelings against anybody, and if Marxism

had not been sponsoring militant atheism, he might have been the best Christian *(sic)* comrade in the Catholic Church!

Reports about the possible candidates and also about future possible cardinals were sent regularly to Moscow. The files of many promising hierarchs after World War II were bulging with the most minute curricula vitae. The archives of the Kremlin have never been kept so up-to-date since that time. The smallest details concerning the top *papabili*—the stuff of which popes are made—were carefully filed and analyzed in great detail.

Roncalli's assessment at the Kremlin was more favourable than that of Montini.

Roncalli had three qualifications that had endeared him to Moscow. He was a genuine socialist. He was easy with the left. He was of true peasant stock and "he sported peasant's hands," an observation which was later confirmed by none other than the daughter of the Soviet Premier, Nikita Kruschev, after her visit to the Vatican, where she met Msgr. Roncalli who, by that time, had become Pope John XXIII.

From a political point of view, Msgr. Roncalli's opposition to Pius XII's anti-Communist crusades had qualified him, more than anything else, to be their protege.

If this attitude had made Roncalli a favourite in Moscow, it had made him unpopular in Washington. There, Roncalli was regarded as a prelate of no great importance and no future—a mistake which the Vatican-Washington lobby repeated twice, having underestimated the strength of the anti-American, progressive elements in the Roman Catholic Church since the end of World War II.

Whether Msgr. Roncalli was aware of the attention he was receiving from the Communist command centre or not, has never been disclosed. That he was sufficiently perceptive about his personal popularity with the leftists of Italy is an undisputed fact. Italian socialists and communists were in frequent contacts with him at different levels. Some of them had direct lines of communication with the Communist Party chiefs, and thus with Moscow.

The leader of the Italian Communist Party, for example, Palmiro Togliatti, considered Roncalli the ideal man for reaching a workable compromise between the Church and Socialism, and

so reported during his frequent visits to Moscow.

The campaign to make Roncalli *papabile* at this stage seemed somewhat devoid of any concrete success, particularly during the general elections of 1948 and 1949, when Togliatti had to counteract Pius XII's threats to any Catholic who dared to vote for the Communists.

In Washington, talk of progressive popes after Pius XII were dismissed as red-inspired moonshine. As for Msgr. Roncalli, the man who had disapproved of the Cult of Our Lady of Fatima, he was treated as a person with not a chance in hell of "denting in" the policies of the Vatican...or words to that effect.

Roncalli's views concerning the sundry Cold War problems, although put on record, were not (as they should have been) assessed in political terms, even by the policy-making people at the CIA subsection specializing in Vatican affairs.

Yet, most of them were pertinent and potentially important. Roncalli did not approve, for instance, of visions or so-called miracles. It is doubtful whether he personally believed in the validity of either. He prided himself on having, besides large hands, equally large feet, firmly planted on the ground. Visions, he said in private, were harmful to true religion. He disapproved of them specifically when they were used as a means of promoting political ends. Occasionally he had also made barbed remarks about Pius XII's apparitions, no less than about Cardinal Spellman—the "dollar boy scout," as he called him—not to mention certain other prominent Americans "eager to test their new atom bombs."

According to him, the Vatican-Washington Alliance was leading to war. The Church had become more reactionary even than the United States, and was being transformed into the antechamber of American dollar imperialism (a familiar Communist epithet).

When Pius XII condemned and then disbanded the pro-Communist worker priests, Msgr. Roncalli first protested in private to the Pope, and then encouraged the worker priests to go ahead "but not too openly."

He was known for his eagerness to start a dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as with the Russian Com-

munists many of whom, he used to say, were more Christian in practice than certain Christians in the West. Atheism, according to him, was an intellectual fashion and was already on the way out. He had known Communists who were more believers than even he was.

Msgr. Roncalli, pretending not to notice the activities of the pro-Communist campaign in the Church, was always non-committal. Once he even said that if the Holy Ghost ever made the mistake of electing him to the Papacy, he would start a reformation the like of which the Church had not seen since the first one, a right-wing Cardinal who knew him well, told the present author.

Pius XII, although immersed in his grandiose schemes, kept a watchful eye on the few progressives in his immediate circle. Their private opinions reached him regularly through an internal intelligence service, adequate for the purpose. This consisted of Vatican gossip, Roman exaggeration, and genuine information. One of his principal informants was Count Della Torre, editor of the Vatican newspaper, the *Osservatore Romano*. Count Della Torre was honest, devout and loyal; and all kinds of information, much of it of a very private nature, reached him.

Pius's intimates were also fed with genuine and false reports by interested diplomats or agents. U.S. Intelligence had a very special channel—a hot line between the Pope's private study and its equivalent in the State Department in Washington.

John Foster Dulles, his brother Alan, and Archbishop Spellman saw to it that nothing should pass unnoticed in Rome. In a word, the intelligence exchange between the Vatican in Rome and the "Little Vatican" in New York was meticulous and accurate.

Roncalli's "lobby" was watched even more closely than the subtler subversive thinking of Msgr. Montini, the Church's other leading progressive. But if the dossiers of both were daily growing thicker in Washington, they were increasing even more in Moscow. The only difference was in the labels. CIA files (and those of cognate agencies) regarded them as "red," while those in Moscow called them "progressives."

The American and Russian intelligence systems, however,

were no less keen of reciprocal reporting. At time, such information was released as "leaks." Some of them were genuine, some concocted. Many were meant to reach the ears of Pius XII, and more often than not, did so.

Finally, the two Dulles brothers, supported by Spellman, asked for Roncalli's removal from the Vatican. Plausible reasons were given: health, age, gentle subversion.

One day in 1953, Msgr. Roncalli was given a Cardinal's hat and then promptly transferred to the Patriarchate of Venice. So far as Pius XII, the Dulles brothers and Cardinal Spellman were concerned, that should have been the end of the pro-Russian prelate, now interred in a political backwater, where the best he could look forward to was an honourable death, unremembered and harmless.

The following year, Msgr. Roncalli's socialist fellow traveller was also transferred, he to the Archbishopric of Milan "to do pastoral work," something totally alien to the former pro-Secretary of State.

The two removals were made at the height of the Cold War, and therefore in political terms, were very significant. The transfers were duly noted in Moscow and also at the Russian Embassy in London, where the two men had come to be regarded as even more *papabile* than ever.

They were now mentioned as the potential means of breaking the Vatican's dependence upon the "war-mongering policies of the United States."

This information was imparted to the author by a person who was well informed about the Kremlin's thinking on the matter. He was first secretary of the Russian Embassy in London, who was in a very special position to know. He had been put into the diplomatic service by Stalin himself, a fellow Georgian. His observation proved to be very accurate, as we shall have occasion to prove presently.

Stalin's death ended his personal sponsorship of Roncalli as a papal candidate. Although the Russian dictator's protege, the First Secretary in London, also vanished following his patron's demise, (as did most of Stalin's Georgian compatriots) during the anti-Stalinist purge, his successor—a Mr. Bruslow who was also a

top KGB official—confirmed that the two progressive prelates were still regarded by the Kremlin as favourite *papabile.*

In 1958, Pope Pius XII's successor ascended the throne of St. Peter. To the surprise and dismay of many, he was the exiled and almost forgotten Cardinal Roncalli, Stalin's favourite old candidate.

The Conclave had been a laborious one; the fight for Roncalli's election was a heated one. It had taken no fewer than eleven ballots to reach a final choice. Washington's lobbying had been outwitted and had come into action when it was too late.

A number of Cardinals were alarmed. Several considered Roncalli's election a disaster. The pro-American element, in particular, predicted the opening of a gulf between the United States and the Vatican. The golden era of the Pius-Dulles-Spellman triumvirate had closed.

Some observers predicted that the new Pontiff would destroy the Church. And the first omen of his pontificate could not have been more indicative. He chose the name of a 15th century anti-pope, John XXIII. The assessment of the conservative element, as well as that of the Soviet embassy official in London, and others in Rome, was proved to be correct:

The Catholic Church would never be the same again.

Chapter Seven

The Pontiff who opened the window. In rush of Communism into the Vatican. Cardinal Spellman is sacked. The favorite non-candidate. Pius XII and the USA planned invasion of Soviet Russia. The prediction of our Lady of Fatima.

In 1903, Msgr. Giuseppe Sarto, the good-hearted Patriarch of Venice, became Pope Pius X. He was the same Pius X, whose ghost in 1939 allegedly appeared to Cardinal Pacelli to predict the latter's elevation to the Papacy.

When that prophecy was fulfilled, Pope Pius XII, besides taking the same name in gratitude, canonized him. The Church had enrolled another saint—St. Pius X.

In 1958, another good-hearted Patriarch of Venice became a Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church. He was John XXIII, formerly Patriarch Roncalli, the prelate that Pius XII had exiled a few years before as a punishment for daring to oppose his anti-Communist policies.

There was one important difference in the careers of the two Patriarchs of Venice, however. While Msgr. Sarto, back in 1903 had left Venice to attend the Conclave, with a return ticket, Cardinal Roncalli had not followed his example.

When someone, prior to his leaving for Rome, had jokingly reminded him of this, Patriarch Roncalli had smiled a knowing smile, as a reporter aptly remarked at the time, and made no comment.

Roncalli's smile on this occasion, far from having been ambiguous, had been a significant one. It was the smile of a *papabile* who had been aware of the subdued activities of a powerful lobby on his behalf.

His candidacy had been known to him as well as to others interested in the radical transformation of the Church, which they

considered to be long overdue. They were not disappointed in their expectations, as they learned almost at once, even before they had left the Conclave which elected him.

The new Pope, in fact, ordered the immediate prolongation of the assembly by one day in order to hold a private Consistory before the Cardinals dispersed.

A small act, but indicative of the impatience the new Pontiff had to begin restructuring the whole Church, which he had determined to free from what he considered her petrifying religious and political dogmatism.

John treated his electors to an illuminating speech, in which he told them in so many words what he intended to do. Then he dismissed them, to start his radical reformation.

Pope John, "the good Pope," as he was called almost at once, or "John the anti-pope," as he was known in certain circles in Rome and in the U.S.A., had realized how bitterly his election had been contested, as evidenced by the eleven ballots necessary to achieve that end.

He turned his attention first to the ultra-conservative and pro-American cardinals, led by Spellman who had so relentlessly opposed his candidacy, an opposition which Pope John never forgot nor forgave.

He informed Spellman that from that time onward, he would not be welcome in Rome. The ban—for that is what in fact it was—had been the more telling because until then Spellman had visited the Pope with a frequency denied even the cardinals resident in Rome.

Spellman had had exceptional private access to Pius XII because he had been a personal friend and confidant of the Pontiff since the latter was a Papal Nuncio in Germany. His intimacy, however, had not been only of a personal nature. They had political significance as well. Through Spellman, Pius XII could deal almost directly with the Catholic lobby in Washington, with the Senate and the Pentagon, and other key figures in the U.S. government. Incidentally, it will be recalled that Spellman was also the Military Vicar of the American armed forces.

John's ban against Cardinal Spellman alarmed certain elements in the United States because the prelate, besides being

a very privileged associate of Pius XII, had also served as the Pope's "grey eminence," acting as a spokesman for all the anit-Communist forces in America.

He was also the unofficial link between the Pope and John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State and, therefore, the Secretary's brother Alan, head of the CIA.

Spellman's special relationship with the Vatican and with the U.S. State Department, made him a power in his own right at both ends of the axis. Thanks to such a status, he had become the channel through which certain U.S. government officials on a policy-making level (not excluding those of the Pentagon) could communicate with those in Italy and elsewhere.

John never forgave Spellman for the role he played in the Cold War, nor for propelling anti-Communist President Diem into a position of power in South Vietnam; nor indeed, for his steady propounding of an anti-Russian hard line.

The ban was even more significant in that it gave clear notice to Spellman and the forces he represented that the special relationship between Washington and the Vatican, which had flourished under Pius XII, was now permanently at an end.

The new pope was anxious for the American lobby at the Vatican to be completely neutralized. The more so, since the American group, aided and abetted by a substantial rightwing minority in the Curia, had almost won the day during the papal election, in their passionate opposition to John.

The favourite non-candidate

At the 1963 Conclave, many of the progressives as well as some of the uncommitted Cardinals would have preferred Msgr. Montini to Roncalli as a candidate for the Papacy, because of Montini's long and distinguished diplomatic career.

But Montini could not be elected Pope because he was outside the College of Cardinals from which the Supreme Pontiff must be chosen. The result was that Msgr. Montini, while being the preferred candidate by many, was in fact lobbying these same people on behalf of Roncalli. He had favoured Roncalli as the future Pope from the beginning, successfully persuading certain noncommitted Cardinals to vote for him.

It was generally believed that it was Msgr. Montini's efforts which in the long run had tipped the scales in favour of Roncalli.This also was something which Pope John never forgot. His first act as Pope, in fact, was to make Msgr. Montini a Cardinal, thus ensuring that at the next Conclave, Montini would be eligible for election to the Papacy.

John's gesture was also meant to indicate that he considered Montini the man best suited to be his successor to the Chair of Peter, a leader who would be fully capable of continuing the radical reforms he planned to launch.

Montini's acceptance of a Cardinal's hat was proof that he supported John's proposed revolution in the Church with the same ardor with which he had opposed Pius XII's anti-Communist campaign, refusing the Cardinal's hat when it was offered him by Pius.

It was the effective, clever lobbying of Msgr. Montini, therefore, plus the subtle Russian influence, which eventually made the large groups of uncommitted cardinals change their minds and gave Roncalli their votes, thus ensuring his election.

The lesson Pope John had learned about the influence of the "reactionaries" spurred him to reduce their power by enlarging the number of Cardinals in the Sacred College. To that effect, early in his pontificate, he created 23 new Cardinals. This brought the College's composition to 74 members, four more than the traditional number cherished by Pius XII.

By 1962, John had effectively neutralized "the ultras," as he called the supporters of Pius XII. He accomplished this by adding 12 Cardinals, all of whom were favourable to his political views and ecclesiastical aims.

Some of the new Cardinals were already well known for their liberal sentiments. Amongst these were Cardinal Godfrey, Archbishop of Westminster, with whom the present author had been in contact for years—ever since Msgr. Godfrey was Papal Legate in Great Britain.

The first external changes which John made after his ascension were those in the papal environment. He did this at once and with a rapidity that astounded everyone. Within forty-eight hours of his coronation, he set to flight the "pestilential rats" as

he called them—that is, certain Jesuits, who had been prominent at the Vatican during Pius XII's 19-year reign.

He was ruthless with all those said to be the "intimates" of his predecessor. For example, he ordered the German nun who had looked after the person of Pius for more than thirty years, to quit the Vatican at once.

He told the editor of the Vatican's official organ, the *Osservatore Romano*,—a man who had complied with all Pius's "idiosyncracies," such as publication of allegedly fake photographs—to be ready to resign. Count Della Torre, who had edited the paper for decades, duly got the sack. Later he was given a job as a librarian at the Vatican Library where he bemoaned his fate, "roaming aimlessly like a nostalgic ghost" until his death in 1967, his nephew, Count Paolo Della Torres later told the author.

Pope John was even more severe with the surviving members of Pius XII's family. The late Pope, in addition to his ruthlessness in political matters, had indulged in a personal weakness believed to be extinct—nepotism.

Nepotism, derived from the Latin word *nepos*, meaning nephew, formerly was used to describe the vainglorious selfishness of Medieval Popes who granted indiscriminately titles of nobility and immense monetary privileges to their nephews.

Pius XII had revived this practice in the 20th century. He distributed privileges of all kinds to his nephews with an open-handed generosity that rivaled that of the pontiffs of the Middle Ages.

By contrast, Pope John's only official relationship with his family from the time he was elected until his death, consisted of two formal occasions: on the first, they came to Rome to witness his coronation; on the second, his funeral.

Radical changes in policy

John's pontificate became immediately identified with his personal outlook, both political and religious. This was felt almost at once, in Italy first, then abroad.

He gave a new editorial policy to the *Osservatore Romano*. He told the leaders of the Christian Democracy Party of Italy not to rely any longer on the Vatican for support, financially or politically. The days when the Christian Democrats had formed a

political branch of the Vatican in the domestic affairs of Italy were over. The Party, accustomed to receiving financial aid, protection, and political directives from Pius XII, reacted with shock.

Many felt that the socialist attitudes of the new pope would mean the ascendancy of the Communists and of their political influence, fears which later proved to be well-founded.

The political structure of Italy began to shift almost at once. The Christian Democrats, who had taken almost for granted their divine right to rule, now felt politically naked. This was all the more true because the new Pope, while abandoning them, went half way to meet the reds.

John opened a dialogue first with the Socialists, and then even with the Communists, making them understand that he would support many of their social reforms.

Following words with deeds, he lifted the ban which Pius had instituted against any kind of intercourse with the Communists, advising the latter to reach an understanding with Christian Democracy. At the same time, he asked them to relent in their fight against the Church, and to abate their anti-clericalism. He hinted that he would not condemn those Catholics who had supported them, not even those who came to the altar to receive Holy Communion, an act that until then had been considered an abomination.

His official acts proved that he was as good as his word. In May 1961, he published his first famous encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, in which he reviewed the whole field of social doctrines, from the time of Pope Leo XIII, down to contemporary times.

With one stroke he placed the Roman Catholic Church on the side of the leftist reformers, insisting that the Church must be the cutting edge of social changes and urgent reforms, including aid to underdeveloped countries, Christian or not.

In April 1963, he wrote an even more celebrated document, *Pacem in Terris*, in which he openly advocated a compromise with Communism.

The tension between conservatives and the left wing in Europe, and with the Russian Communists relaxed as if by a miracle.

Relations between the Vatican and the Soviet Union also improved beyond recognition, thanks to the fact that Pope John initiated an entirely new approach to the Church.

Whereas Pius XII had envisaged a defeated and occupied Russia, John envisioned a Red Russia cooperating with the West, and the Orthodox Church eager to collaborate with Rome in the creation of a new Christian front.

This radical change of attitude towards the Soviet Union and the Orthodox Church meant an even more radical shifting of religious beliefs. This, indeed, was a most dangerous step, since once religious emotion is involved in political matters, the reaction of the two can provoke unpredictable and often disastrous results.

Pope John tackled the thorny issue with a bluntness which shocked many Catholics throughout the world. To be sure, the maneuver was not carried out directly. It was kept well in the background at first. But when his attitude towards the Fatima cult was fully realized, it was too late for the millions of devotees to do anything but accept the situation.

We have already seen how the anti-Communist crusade of Pius XII was conducted. Pius had planned a kind of holy war, whose culmination would have been a religio-ideological Armageddon.

This was supposed to have taken place when the third great prophecy of Fatima, which was to have been revealed to the world in 1960. By that year, according to the formidable anti-Russian trio—Pius XII, Cardinal Spellman, and U.S. Secretary of State Dulles—Russia should be defeated and occupied.

Pius, who always thought and planned in quasi-apocalyptic terms, had carefully planned his time of revealing the final secret of Fatima. One day he "confided" to a few intimates, who curiously enough seemed to have close connectin with the Catholic and world press, how he had read the third prophecy. Upon reading it, Pius informed them, he had "trembled with fear almost fainted with horror."

Pope John XXII, however, being a matter of fact man, fully realizing the anticommunist implications of the cult, considered the revelation as an arm of the Pentagon and indeed as a leg-

pulling burlesque. In France, the French hierarchy, at the personal instigation of Pope John, condemned the cult, as a war mongering movement meant to support the USA armed conflict against Russia.

Soon afterward the new Pope called for the Second Vatican Council. The story had been told of how, during an interview, he opened a window of his study, explaining that the reason he had decided to call the Council, was to permit a new refreshing wind to blow through the stuffy edifice of the Church.

The purpose of the Council he said, was to bring the Church in tune with the "new times."

The new times were meant to usher in a devastating Vatican revolution, which was to transform the very foundation of the Roman Catholic Church.

Chapter Eight

The pink pontiff opens the path for a red pope.

The passing of anti-Communist Pius XII and of anti-American Pope John XXIII, ended, and at the same time initiated two different eras, totally opposed to each other in religion, diplomacy and politics.

At seventy-seven Pope John had been called the "caretaker" pontiff, because of his age, yet despite this, and his good nature, John was a dedicated revolutionary. Those who had promoted his candidacy, with the specific objective of forcing the Church into a fundamental new outlook, congratulated themselves on the rightness of their choice.

The new Pope proved to be radical; and even more, he had imparted his radicalism to the Church. He issued encyclicals, as the foundation stones of his revolution—"Mater et Magistra" in 1961, and "Pacem in Terris" in 1963.

The Pope had written the two encyclicals in cooperation with the two top experts, in Marxist dialectics, Father Jean Calvez and Msgr. Pavan.

The most fundamental message of John's teaching was that religion and Marxism, could be harmonized. The message alarmed, not only the USA State Department and the CIA, but also the Pentagon. Cardinal Spellman, the champion of the Vietnam War, was told to sponsor an intensive lobby, to neutralize the Pope's "horrendous" doctrine.

At the same time, however, he was assigned a far more urgent task; to prepare the candidature of the next Pope. The ever more elaborate USA network in Rome and elsewhere, was set in motion.

USA Cardinals, were briefed, foreign Cardinals courted. Direct and indirect pressure was put on the Pope himself. The USA's disapproval became openly hostile. When finally Pope

John started to receive Soviet leaders in the Vatican itself, it became inimical.

The relations between the USA and the Vatican, deteriorated. The Vatican-Washington Alliance, ceased to exist. It was soon replaced by the new political creature; the Vatican-Moscow Alliance. The latter, although still in embryonic form, grew daily, into a political reality of great import. It started to alter the balance of power. The pendulum, as far as the Vatican was concerned, had begun to swing from Washington to Moscow. The USA became worried.

The more so, since the second Vatican Council which John had convoked, although still in session when John died, had already spread the doctrine of ideological subversion, all over the world.

In Latin-America, the perilous amalgamation of Christianity with Marxism, called Liberation Theology, became a kind of religious Marxist gospel. It began to threaten the social order everywhere south of the USA.

Ecumenis, another of John's creatures, had turned into a Trojan horse, for the acceptance of Communism, throughout the Catholic and non-Catholic world.

In the realm of pragmatic politics, the birth of the Vatican Moscow Alliance, became a living factor, and had started to yield political results, of the gravest consequence for the foreign policy of the USA.

The situation was extremely serious. The Vatican pendulum, was leaning towards Moscow and was endangering the grand strategy of the USA, by aligning the whole of the Catholic Church on the side of Communism.

When, therefore, the USA heard the first rumour of the impending end of the Pope, feverish preparations, were commenced for the forthcoming Conclave. The next Conclave was considered the most dramatic Conclave so far. Since upon its result there depended the future formulation of the Vatican's relationship with the USA and, of course, with Soviet Russia.

The task was not an easy one. Pope John, within four brief years, had replenished the sacred College of Cardinals, with progressive, if not with Communist-minded, recruits, many of them

from the third world. Third world meant "anti-Americanism." Since Cardinals there considered the USA, not only anti-Russian, but "anti-progressive." That is, reactionary. And therefore anti-third world.

In Italy itself, the phenomenon became a serious one. The Italian Communists, spurred by the Pope, had gained the elections, as other Communists had done in other parts of Europe.

Then it became known how the Vatican had had direct contact with the Kremlin. The Pope had invited the Russian Premier to visit him in Rome. Soon the revolution initiated by Pope John had become so devastating, that a well known Catholic complained bitterly about his reign, "400 years of history destroyed in four years," he said.

A dictum echoed by many others inside and outside the Vatican. Also at the State Department in Washington, and amongst the USA Cardinals led by Cardinal Spellman, who at this period was calling the USA troops in Vietnam, "the good soldiers of Christ."

As John felt the end was approaching, he took steps to ensure the succession. He wanted his "revolution" to continue. Indeed, to expand.

He was fearful that the USA might stage a conclave "coup d'etat," with the election of an American "sponsored" papal creature. To prevent that, he began to lobby for his favourite man, Msgr. Montini.

Msgr. Montini, the former Secretary of State of anti-Communist Pius XII, had been downgraded by him and exiled to the North of Italy, as the Archbishop of Milan. Montini refused to accept a cardinal hat from Pius XII.

When, following the Pope's death, the Cardinals searched for his successor, they discovered that Montini, was not eligible for the Papacy, because he was not a Cardinal. When after the Conclave Cardinal Roncalli, became Pope, the first thing he did, was to give Montini a Cardinal's hat.

John XXII's swift promotion of Montini was taken as a clear indication, that Montini was the new Pope's favourite man, and therefore, by a tacit implication, his successor.

John's testament had encompassed his revolution into a

grand strategy, the development of which was sub-divided into three concurrently running phases: a) abandonment of the Vatican's close ties with the USA as the Vatican's principal partner; b) entente, cooperation and tacit alliance with Soviet Russia and c) detente with the entire Communist world.

In practical political terms, this meant first, the immediate normalization of relations between Moscow and the Vatican; second, the harmonizing of ideological strategies between Communism and Catholicism; third, de facto recognition of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe; fourth, cessation of Catholic hostility against national Communist movements in Italy and France; and last, but not least, an official and radical change of attitude on the part of the Catholic Church towards Communism in general and Russian Communism in particular.

The practical external manifestations of all this was that very soon an incredulous world and an astounded American witnessed the (until recently) inconceivable spectacle of a stream of Communist leaders into and out of the Vatican as though they had suddenly been converted to Catholicism, although, as some cynics were quick to observe, just the reverse was true. It was Catholicism which had suddenly been converted to Communism.

Behind these diplomatic formalities there was to be found evidence of a solid practical strategy aimed at bringing the two erstwhile enemies into close cooperation. The strategy at this period could be summarized thus:

The very active opposition of the Church against Communism ceased in the political, religious and diplomatic fields. A novel approach to the Orthodox Church was initiated. Dialogue with the Communist parties in Europe began in earnest. The Catholic parties—that is, the Christian Democratic Party in Italy, in France, and even in Germany were told not to expect any more direct support from the Vatican. They were also advised not to campaign against Communism, as they had done under Pius XII. The very active hostility of the Catholic Church behind the Iron Curtain was stopped; the Vatican gave de facto recognition to the Russian integration of Eastern Europe into the Soviet Empire; and finally, the Vatican began a policy of active cooperation with Russia in the diplomatic and ideological fields.

It was a grand strategy of the first magnitude.

On his death bed Pope John counselled Cardinal Montini, to carry on his work.

Cardinal Montini had no need to be reminded, since Pope John's revolution was also his own. Had he not cut short his diplomatic career because he had always advocated such a grand strategy?

Cardinal Montini's potential papal candidature, became a focus of febrile plots and counterplots, "lobbying" and long ranged intrigues, in Rome, inside the Vatican and in the conspiratorial corridors of the CIA.

His election if successful, would have spelt a major disaster, for the Church and for the world. That, at least, was the consensus of the old guard and of the supporters of anti-Communist pro-American Pius XII.

When Pope John XXII died, therefore, fears and hopes swept certain sensitive quarters in various capitals of the world. At the announcement of his demise, the workers of the Vatican, decided to put out, instead of a white and yellow papal banner, a red flag, with the sickle and the cross well displayed on it. The true symbol of the revolution which Pope John had started.

But also a good symbol, of the revolution which his successor, was meant to implement. Pope John's wish, was eventually to be carried out, with a vengeance.

Chapter Nine

The election of a Red Pope. The USA is horrified. Secret contacts with Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. Stalin scorns the Vatican's warning of Hitler's invasion.

The revolution which had been launched by "the radical shepherd," John XXIII, was continued and expanded by his successor, Pope Paul VI.

From the moment of Paul's ascension, the forces set in motion by his predecessor, gained momentum. He lost no time in setting precedents—as a person, as Supreme Pontiff, and as a politician.

For instance, he was the first Pope to set foot in the Holy Land; the first in history to visit Australia and India; the first to go to North and South America; and to visit the heart of Africa. He was the first to address the United Nations in New York.

All this was a far cry from the life style of the preceeding Popes who, only two generations before, had incarcerated themselves in the Vatican in protest against the seizure of Rome by Italy in 1870.

Pope Paul VI brought innovations, suppressed ancient traditions, and Protestanized the beautiful Catholic liturgy. He also abolished the ancient language of the Church to such an extent that it became an ecclesiastical crime to say or to hear the Mass in Latin.

His innovations disconcerted the faithful, bewildered untold millions and cast doubt in the hearts of many who, until then, had taken their Church to be immutable—a fixed point by which to steer their spiritual course.

The desertion from historical Catholicism had never been carried out on such a large scale since the days of the Reformation.

Yet Paul VI himself appeared to be anything but a revolutionary. He was mild mannered, considerate, gentle, and exceptionally diligent in the performance of his papal duties. The mere fact that there were periods when he had to deliver eight speeches a day, and to see more than one million visitors in a year, testified to that.

When he became Pope in 1963, he found the Second Vatican Council in his hands, and even more, a full-scale revolution within the Church itself. If there was even an individual fully prepared to deal with both, however, it was he. He possessed two outstanding qualifications to act as Pope John's successor: he had breathed diplomacy all his adult life, and he was also a radical, politically more to the left than even Pope John.

He had had first-hand experience with the intricacies of the Vatican's multifarious activities, mostly in the authoritative confines of the Vatican's Secretariat of State—the equivalent, in diplomatic terms, of the U.S. State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA combined. Twenty-nine out of his 32 years of service in the Church had been spent working in the Vatican. That was in itself a unique record.

With the exception of Pope Pius XII, he had the widest knowledge of the most sensitive and far-flung operations of any other top-ranking diplomat in the whole of the Roman Curia.

From 1945 to 1955—that is, from the end of World War II until the height of the Cold War—his pro-socialist leanings had come openly into view, notwithstanding Pius XII's anti-Communist policies. He had sided, even if somewhat equivocally, with liberal Catholics on almost all social and political issues. In other words, he favoured the pro-Communist members of the Church.

Despite his ecclesiastical rectitude, his radical views, even then, had become so well known that he was widely labelled the "Red Pro-Secretary of State."

Pius XII tolerated him and accepted his services because of his diplomatic skill and also because of his scrupulous obedience in carrying out orders, even when they were contrary to his personal convictions.

At the same time, Pius had counter-balanced Montini's progressive ideas with those of another, no less skillful, diplomat. He

was Cardinal Demenico Tardini, a dour conservative, as anti-Communist as Pius himself, and as determined as he to work the downfall of Soviet Russia and of world Communism.

Tardini and Montini worked for years in tandem as Pro-Secretaries of State, busy in the promotion of diplomatic objectives, but privately favourable to their respective beliefs.

Thus, whereas Montini was constantly suggesting reforms and changes, Tardini was advocating the reverse, convinced that his colleague was a cryptosocialist, if not worse.

Thanks to his traditional conservatism, Tardini had been considered by many as the logical successor to anti-Communist Pope Pius XII. A succession, by the way, which had been taken almost for granted at the U.S. State Department. Washington's conclusion was based not so much on an estimation of Cardinal Tardini's personal capabilities, as on their cool assessment of what they considered a political reality. That was an uninterrupted continuation of the Vatican-American anti-Communist campaign. The expectations of both Washington and Pius XII, however, were cut short when Cardinal Tardini died. The field had been left wide open to socialist Montini.

The prospective of Montini making progress in the Vatican filled the USA's State Department with horror.

A file on Montini was not only distinguished with question marks about his conduct and opinions; it was marked in red and black, two colors, indicating "positively dangerous."

The reason which had marked Montini as "positively dangerous" was not only because of his "progressive" ideas, but because he had been classified as a "revolutionary Marxist oriented prelate."

That had been proved, when he had acted as "a pragmatic" pro-Secretary of State. That meant he had been classified as a "doer" in the active field of "progressive" anti-Americanism, in local and global strategies.

While in key positions under anti-Communist Pius XII, from which he was supposed to implement the operations of the Cold War, Montini had dared—successfully—to bypass the surveillance of the Pope.

His "secret" moves had been daring, risky, and imaginative.

It had startled the USA. The State Department had assumed, to justify Montini's smartness, that his ploy, had helped to keep Soviet Russia on friendly terms with the Vatican. Since the Pope was pro-American, Montini's step, therefore, would have benefitted also the USA.

Montini's secret moves, however, had gone even further than the USA had envisaged. As early as 1945, in fact, he had dared to contact, none other than Stalin himself. Whether his contact with the Russian dictator had been known to the Pope, or not, was never disclosed, even less documented.

The revelation, that he had done so, however, put Montini beyond the pale as far as the USA was concerned. Montini's behaviour gave shivers to the State Department. A very special "watch" was put on Montini's career.

The USA's preoccupation with him, proved to be more than justified. For Montini, later on, far from refraining from his secretive moves attempted more daring ones. The latest, which made the USA mad at him, had been Montini's secret attempt to contact none other than Mao Tse-tung himself.

Fortunatley for the USA, which considered China her own exclusive field, with her support of anti-Communist Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Tse-tung, refused to negotiate with the Vatican, or rather with Montini, and returned Montini's letter unopened.

Montini was never forgiven by the State Department. Yet, Montini, even earlier on, had done something even more dramatic and potentially more dangerous. It was said, although it had never been proven, that in fact, during World War II, Montini had warned Stalin about Hitler's oncoming attack against Soviet Russia, in 1941.

The warning would have been of incalculable benefit to Stalin. Stalin, however, refused to believe that Hitler had been planning to invade Russia, so soon after his signing of the Berlin-Moscow pact of non aggression. Montini's, or rather the Vatican's "progressives" warning had been in vain.

The charges and speculation against Montini, increased with the passing of the years. Pope Pius XII was warned by the USA to get rid of him. Montini, meanwhile had become the "bete noire" of the USA, and above all of the intelligence machinery.

But if there was consternation at the CIA and in Rome, when Montini was elevated to the papacy, there was tacit jubilation amidst the silent radicals on either side of the Atlantic, not to mention Moscow.

It must be remembered that the Cold War was then in full swing and was reaching dangerous proportions. Also, because of the apprehension it had given to Stalin and to others, the Russian Communist lobby had already embarked upon a campaign for the election of a suitable progressive papal candidate to succeed Pope Pius XII.

The leading favourite at this stage was, as we have already seen, Stalin's former schoolmate, Cardinal Agagianian. Cardinal Roncalli, although in the running, was still considered a third alternative, both at Rome and in Moscow.

Roncalli's name jumped ahead when it was realized, at Pius XII's death, that Msgr. Montini could not be elected Pope, owing to a technicality. Montini had, in fact, excluded himself from the Sacred College, from which a Pope must be selected, by refusing a cardinal's hat when Pius had demoted him to the see of Milan, North Italy.

Had it not been for that obstacle, it was almost a certainty that he would have been elected Pope in 1958, rather than Cardinal Roncalli.

Yet, had Msgr. Montini been technically eligible to the vacant papacy, it is doubtful whether the election would have been that easy. Not because he did not possess the right qualifications, in the eyes of the progressives and the pro-Russian cardinals, but on the contrary, because he was endowed with too many of them. His election would have made his extreme ideas so obvious that he might have scared too many and too soon. In other words, a radical Pope like him would have been premature at the time.

Hence, the selection of Roncalli as the obvious best choice.

Chapter Ten

The CIA blacklists a "progressive" papal candidate. Spellman and John Foster Dulles ask for his removal. Dangerous to the USA's policies. The left wing Cardinal, who became Pope, in spite of USA's opposition.

After John's death—that is, at the Conclave of 1963—Montini, now a Cardinal, was recognized at once as John's heir apparent, the man best qualified to carry on John's revolution. Moreover, he could do the job without too sudden a breach and by means of the velvety softness of super-diplomacy, behind which was the irresistibility of a steam-roller.

Cardinal Agagianian, although still *papabile* in the view of many, now would have been too much of a liability, had he been elected instead of Montini.

The progressive assessment had been a practical and sensible one, since it reasoned that the election of a Russian, pro-Communist Pope following the death of a revolutionary like John, would have constituted too blatant a break with the traditional acceptance of a traditional Pope, no matter how progressive.

Most of the Catholic millions, still confused by the upheaval in their Church, might not have reconciled themselves so easily to a Russian-born Pope, a former protege of Stalin. Such a pontiff, while might have rallied around him the great number of left-wing Catholics in Europe and those in the uncommitted nations, would nevertheless have alienated hundreds of millions in Western Europe and the United States.

A gentler policy with a gentler Pope, therefore, seemed the most judicious course. And what better choice than Montini, the former Pro-Secretary of State?

Had not Montini opposed the anti-Communist policies of Pius XII? Had he not been always a convinced leftist? Had he not been consistently anti-American? Last, but not least, would not his

election ensure the continuation of the pro-Russian, pro-Communist, and anti-American programmes of the late Pope John?

The days of the American hegemony at the Vatican under Pius XII had not been forgotten. Cardinal Spellman, one of the voting cardinals, in the eyes of his colleagues, was still the representative, not only of New York, but also of the Dulles brothers, the U.S. Secretary of Navy Matthews, and of all the hardline anti-Communist officials in Washington.

This working machinery of the Vatican-Washington partnership had been conceived by an American Jesuit, promoted by an American Catholic politician, and strongly supported—notwithstanding official disclaimers—by the Catholic hierarchy and their friends.

It was a fact, well known by the whole Conclave, that Montini had been consistently opposed to all this. Also, that during the potentially most dangerous moments of the Cold War, certain ultra-secretive diplomatic activities had gone inexplicably wrong, e.g., frequent misunderstandings with the United States, or unexpected leaks that more often than not compromised the ideological operations of the Vatican-Washington Axis.

Montini's sacking from the Vatican in 1954, following that of Roncalli the previous year, had indicated very clearly the reasons Pius XII had in mind when he "promoted" him to pastoral work in Milan.

His transfer from the Vatican had been the equivalent, in military terms, of a general who had been directing the grand strategy of an army, being promoted to supervise the kitchen batteries of a regiment.

Montini had responded to the Pope's snub by refusing to accept a cardinal's hat, a refusal which probably cost him election to the papacy in 1958, as we have already noted.

His protest—the most daring he had ever made against Pius XII—had been greatly appreciated by the growing number of anti-American elements within and outside the Vatican. It had given the greatest satisfaction, however, to Montini himself, who had known all along what had caused his being sent into exile.

His demotion had, in fact, originally been conceived in Washington, where Montini had always been adjudged a real danger to

the Vatican-American partnership. It had first been suggested by Cardinal Spellman, acting as the mouthpiece of Alan Dulles, head of the CIA, although the last word had been left to his brother, John Foster Dulles, then U.S. Secretary of State. Secretary Dulles was anxious about having fool-proof security concerning Vatican-American relations.

The frequent attempts to remove Montini from the Vatican were known in Moscow, something which the present author also knew at the time, thanks to hints given him by one of the top Soviet intelligence officials at the Russian Embassy in London.

In Washington, Alan Dulles had built up an enormous dossier on Montini, beginning with his family background. Montini's father, while a member of the Italian Parliament as a deputy of the Catholic Party of Italy, seemed to have influenced his son towards the left, ever since Montini's student days. The author was informed about this, not by Russian Intelligence, but by a prominent Catholic—none other than the founder and leader of the Catholic Party of Italy, Msgr. Dom Sturzo, while Montini was still a minor prelate at the Vatican.

Alan Dulles, who worked very closely with his brother, John, had compiled a tale-telling file about the red Pro-Secretary of State. Cardinal Spellman, the closest personal friend to Pope Pius XII, had the opportunity to scrutinize it whenever certain delicate operations of the anti-Communist strategy were to be promoted, or when fresh information about Montini's activities were added to the CIA files.

Some of Montini's political doings which had been unknown even to Pius XII, at one point were disclosed to the Pope by Cardinal Spellman, who had been briefed by Alan Dulles.

The accusations were mostly based upon suspicions. It was not so much that Montini had been guilty of any crime or really dangerous disclosures. His honesty was never questioned. What was questioned were his political leanings to the left.

These were considered a serious liability. It will be recalled that his dismissal from his Vatican post took place at the time the CIA-Vatican intelligence apparati were busy with the Catholic and anti-Communist forces inside Hungary, where they were seeking to foment an anti-Communist uprising.

The intended coup was aimed at restoring Hungary to the comity of Western Europe as an important facet of the Cold War, and the subsequent liberation of Eastern Europe from Russian domination.

In the case of Hungary, one of the objectives was the installation of an anti-Russian and pro-American administration, headed by Cardinal Mindszenty. The attempt failed, owing chiefly to the refusal of the United States to become openly involved after Russia crushed the rebellion by sending her tanks rolling into Budapest in 1956.

The preparatory moves in the Hungarian build-up, initiated about 1952-1954, required the strictest measures of security; hence Montini's removal.

It was said afterwards that the "promotion" of Montini to the See of Milan had been prompted by Pius XII as a step for Montini to succeed him. The reverse had been the case. And the simple fact that Montini dared to defy the Pope by refusing a cardinal's hat, was the most convincing answer Msgr. Montini himself could give to such speculations.

When Pope John died, therefore, the anti-American and pro-Communist clique at the College of Cardinals decided to act as swiftly as they could, before the popular enthusiasm for the "wind of change" subsided. Lobbying, which had been going on since John's elevation, was intensified. The pro-red cardinals presented diplomatic packages, according to which a continuation of the policy of rapproachment with Communism would yield immense benefits to the Church, not only inside Russian-dominated Eastern Europe, but even more outside of it.

Soviet Russia, so they argued, would ease its iron grip on the Church in the Communist counties. Moreover, she would direct the various Communist parties of Europe to slow down their attack on European democracy. At the same time the real, or imagined perils of the Vatican-Washington partnership were magnified, as were the "miraculous advantages" to be reaped from the embryonic Vatican-Moscow alliance.

A logical succession

Further to that, it was recalled that Montini had been a

favourite of Pope John XXIII. Also, that the two had shared the same ideological outlook regarding the progressive reorientation of the Church in accordance with the revolutionary programme initiated by John.

The practical results had been that as soon as John had opened the window to the wind of change, he dispatched Cardinal Montini on a worldwide tour. His task was to report especially on the conditions of two of the poorest areas of the globe—black Africa and Latin America.

The mission had been significant and well-planned. For it was precisely in black Africa and Latin America that was to be found the greatest reservoir of revolutinary forces could be promoted by the new Vatican.

During the Conclave, therefore, when the cardinals were faced with choosing Pope John's successor, the result had been predictable.

In 1963, Cardinal Montini—the first cardinal whom John had nominated, became Pope Paul VI. True to the spirit of John, he set himself the serious task of carrying on his predecessor's transformation of the Church.

The direction his new pontificate was taking was indicated in his first encyclical—*Ecclesiam Suam*—issued in August 1964, fourteen months after his coronation. In it, Paul denounced atheism, but at the same time he also encouraged keeping the line open to Communism. "The Church," he said, "should enter into a dialogue with the world..." since "we do not despair that ideologies [communism] might one day be able to enter into a more positive dialogue with the Church."

Thereupon he began, in an unprecedented and unbecoming manner, a global tour, setting foot in sundry areas of the world, beginning with Jerusalem and ending up in the Yankee Stadium in New York.

The wayfaring new Pope was seen by millions: seated in open helicopters, or boarding jet planes in tourist fashion, or sitting casually in superficial conversation with politicians (e.g., chatting with President Johnson on a setee of a commercial hotel).

These were spectacles which, notwithstanding Paul's well-

meant intentions, mortified millions of believers, accustomed to thinking of the Roman Pontiff as the Vicar of Christ on earth, with the aura of a distant Vatican, dematerialized by mysticism, by history, and by religion.

Pope Paul VI, however, true to his own convictions, had given them but a preliminary glimpse of the behaviour to be expected of tomorrow's progressive papacy.

Chapter Eleven

Reality of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance. The paramount role of the Pope, in the USA-Soviet confrontation. Suspicious rumours about his death.

The Vatican-Moscow Alliance, initiated by Pope John XXII, but turned into a reality by Paul VI, was not an abstraction. It became a political reality, which affected the balance of power, between the USA and the Soviet Union.

The decision taken by a religious leader, that is, by the Pope, therefore, by trespassing from the ecclesiastical into the political field, had influenced the policies of the super-powers. And thus the political equilibrium of world politics.

The importance which the USA had given to the election of a Pope, since the death of pro-American Pius XII, and election of Paul VI, had become paramount in the thinking of the State Department. The results, had been too striking to be ignored. They had affected the USA foreign policy, almost beyond recognition.

The lesson of the failure of the USA to influence the election of a pro-American Pope, during the Conclave of 1958, had been too painfully striking to be ignored, or forgotten.

The adverse consequence of that USA failure, was enormous. The price astronomical, in terms of lost opportunity, the deployment of USA policies, and the spent billions, in counteracting the Vatican's subversive operations, within and outside the Church.

Paul VI started the dissemination of his pernicious principles via encyclicals, going further than Pope John in his condemnation of liberal capitalism, free enterprise and the basic tenents upon which the USA was founded.

He repeatedly condemned "the imperialism of money," an indirect reference to the dollar domination of the Western world. He went even further; he condemned private property, saying

that to give wealth and land to the poor, was not charity, it was to give back to them, what had always belonged to them.

These insidious Marxist principles, once divested of their ecclesiastical wrapping, took horrendous roots, where the poor were collectively dominant in Latin America.

There, Liberation Theology grew to unexpected strength. It became ramified, turned openly revolutionary, and tangibly menacing.

Guerrillas sprung up everywhere, some of them led by Catholic priests, with the tacit encouragement of their Bishops.

The stability of Latin America, was threatened. Military operations had to be taken, to counteract the menacing advance of the spreading Liberation Theology.

When the new doctrine became active in Central America, the USA had to intervene to stop the menace. The perils of potential multi-Cubas were too obvious. The dangers to her security had become real.

Cuba spelt Russia in the Western world. Additional Central American Cubas would have meant the positive encirclement of the USA by Marxist regimes. But if the alliance became a menace to the USA, it yielded concrete benefits to the Catholic Church. After having concluded the first historical "compromise" with the Communists of Italy, Paul VI developed a growing co-operation with Euro-Communism, something which helped, indirectly, to the growth of anti-Americanism throughout Europe. Paul went further in the religious field. He abolished Latin, thus levelling the Church with the proletariat's dislike of upper-class rituals and culture. A shock from which many Catholics never recovered.

The most concrete benefit of the Vatican-Mowcow Alliance, however, was harvested in Eastern Europe.

There, the Church had been oppressed, if not persecuted, by the Communist regimes, since they had been forcibly annexed to the Soviet Union. Bishops and Cardinals were arrested and imprisoned. The Church's activities, severely restricted.

With the advent of Paul VI, a detente of extraordinary dimension took place. Bishops and Cardinals were released, reinstated and courted by the Communists. Schools were opened, the

Communist regimes financed Church operations; new buildings, including new churches were built, and paid for by the Communist states.

In Communist Poland, seminaries were opened and subsidized by the Communist party; recruits for the Catholic clergy increased and although the Primate, Cardinal Wyszynski, opposed the Communists' many bishops, he cooperated whole-heartedly with them, led by the Bishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla.

Paul VI's pontificate, in short, became and proved to be a disaster, for anything or anybody who opposed Marxist operations, in Europe, in the Americas, or in any other parts of the world.

The USA Cardinals, were mobilized against his pontificate; the CIA's network was tripled—their operations, although venturing into the delicate field of Church activities, were given new impetus, and "daring" objectives.

Pope Paul became the target of invisible, imponderable campaigns, of vilification, of distortions, and of black propaganda. Many Catholics "prayed" and acted against his pontificate. The chief operators were in the USA, that is, the USA hierarchy, some of whose prelates were active pillars of the USA intelligence; chief of them, Cardinal Spellman.

When the anti-Paul campaign seemed not to have visible effect on the Pope's policies, the USA began a subtle defamation crusade personally against him.

The world press, and even more curious, certain sections of the Catholic Press, began to talk about the Pope's "resignation."

The Pope should "resign" for the benefit of the Church, they said. The British Catholic press joined in the campaign. Certain sections of it had been subsidized by the CIA, as had other journals, in other countries.

Paul set in motion a campaign of his own. This involved the elevation of certain prelates to higher positions, everywhere. He began with the Sacred College of Cardinals. Their main qualification—they had to be left-wing. Most of the "Progressive Cardinals" came from the Third World, where Liberation Theology flourished.

Within a few years, a massive collection of progressives,

became the dominant ideological "coloratura" of the Sacred College. The moves were duly noticed by the USA, which became increasingly apprehensive about the forthcoming Conclave.

When, eventually the first rumours of Paul VI's approaching end were substantiated, the operational activities of the CIA's special section, were set in motion, ready to "do" pre-Conclave programming.

The operations, were set in motion, before the Pope actually died. Paul, who had become aware of it, became more introvert than ever, observing what was going on with mounting sadness and dejection. He knew that the tentacles of the USA counter-intelligence, had not only penetrated the Vatican, but had actually wrapped round his entourage like the tentacles of an octopus. During the last few days, prior to his death, he gave certain hints that he had guessed what was going on.

Paul's demise, although medically correct, and seemingly professionally "normal" was wrapped up with subtle speculations and vague rumours.

The deterioration of his health, had been so unusual, that whispers concerning the "potential acceleration of his demise" circulated for a while. Many were convinced that something had happened. They justified their suspicions by the fact that the announcement of the quick deterioration of Paul's health, had been welcomed with unseeming delight in various quarters, in Rome and abroad.

Abroad, meant mostly in the USA. And more precisely in the headquarters of the CIA, of the National Security Council, and associated formulators of American grand strategies, headed by the Pentagon.

Speculations about his impending death, have remained mere speculations. Some suggested, without any positive evidence, that Paul's life could have been "prolonged." How, it is difficult to prove.

The fact, however, was, that many had come to a firm belief, that Paul's life could have been "prolonged." The belief was widespread, and had been taken seriously, even by some medical authorities. A good number of these, expressed opinions, which left doubts, concerning the effectiveness of the medical treat-

ment, used during the Pope's last illness.

One of these experts, Dr. Christian Barnard, the pioneer of heart transplants, when told that the Pope had not been given intensive care treatment, indeed, had not been placed in an intensive care unit, made a most serious comment: "If this was to happen in South Africa, the doctors responsible would have been denounced to their Medical Association for negligence."(1)

If seen in the light of a potential intelligence unit, responsible for the "resignation" campaign, Dr. Barnard's condemnation of Paul's treatment or lack of it, could, given rise to positive suspicions, about the acceleration of Paul's death, via deliberate negligence.

After all, for those who wanted an accelerated "resignation" an "accelerated demise" was even better. The opportunity was there. Why not quicken the pace of a natural death, to get rid of a dangerous Pope, since the promotion of a new pontiff would have brought nearer a new papacy?

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(1) See *In God's Name* by David Yallop, 1984.

Chapter Twelve

Importance of the choice of a right Pope. Immensity of the political interests, at stake. The veto. Historical precedents. Pressure from the superpowers.

The selection of a Pope, is not only an ecclesiastic event, of import to the Catholic Church. It is a paramount operation, concerning the political, balance of power of many nations, or groups of nations.

That is so, since the influence embodied in the Vatican, can be manipulated, by one single man, the Pope.

The Vatican's vast machinery, can be used by him, in accordance with his personal prejudices, political bias, personal idiosyncracies, likes and dislikes. Nothing and nobody, can impede him to do what he considers right or wrong. For, although the Pope is surrounded by a ponderous administration, namely the Curia, he rules, single handed.

Cardinals can advise, or rule certain departments of the Vatican, but cannot force the Pope to change his decisions concerning religious or political issues. We have already pointed out how the Pope is the last absolute autocrat in the world. Because of such reality, his status is taken with the utmost seriousness by small and big administrations, including the superpowers.

We have already seen the fundamental difference in the pontificates of three contemporary Popes. Also the fundamental political implications which their personal political bias had provoked, by profoundly affecting the policies of Europe and of the Western world.

The phenomenon was anything but new. In fact, it had been the basic characteristic of the Papacy, almost since its inception. The secular power through the centuries had always been profoundly concerned about which Pope was being elected. Because of it, Kings and Emperors attempted, very often successfully, to interfere with the election or defeat, of any would-be papal can-

didate.

Hence their supporting or opposing Cardinals whom they considered hostile or friendly to them. Very often, prior to any forthcoming Conclave, they approached the Cardinals, with promises of patronage, financial rewards, or even to grant them whole provinces. On the reverse side, they promised punishments, imprisonment and even execution.

Corruption and bribery were part and parcel of every Conclave. We have to mention the two infamous Borgia Popes, Calixtus (1455-58) and his relation Pope Alexander VI—Rodrigo Borgia (1492-1503) the two most notorious scoundrels of the Papacy, to summon up memories of immense corruption, when sacks of gold were literally exchanged to buy the Papacy.

The Papacy became the most lucrative commodity of the Middle Ages, and of the Renaissance. Bribes were openly discussed and exchanged, between the Cardinals, and the papal candidate, as a matter of course. A kind of ecclesiastical Wall Street.

Patrons, in the guise of secular rulers, sent their envoys, to the Cardinals, before these were enclosed in Conclave, with promises of titles, pensions, and bribes, running into millions.

It must be remembered that until as recently as 1870, the Popes were not only Popes. They were literally secular kings. They ruled, almost half of central Italy. Therefore, once a man, no matter how low his origin, was elected Pope, he became also a king. That meant, that the Pope's families, were ennobled, and were created princes, dukes, counts and the like.

Very often, fights broke out amongst the Cardinals themselves, inside the Conclave itself. When Cardinals could not agree which papal candidates to elect, they prolonged the Conclaves to incredible lengths. Some lasted weeks; and months. Indeed, years.

The King of Spain or of France, more often than not dictated who should be elected Pope. The Emperor of Austria, for instance, used to send a special envoy, before each Conclave, with a signed paper, in which they forbade Cardinals, whom they disliked, from being elected.

The paper, was officially known as "a veto." Very often Car-

dinals, entered the Conclave with a royal veto in their pockets. Next to the vetos they used to receive large bills of credit. That spelt the offer of immense fortunes, to the Cardinals who helped to elect the Pope, whom, their protector, wanted to be elected.

The kings' eagerness to elect the right Pope, was due not so much to their personal likes and dislikes, of the papal candidate, since often, he was totally unknown to them personally. They wanted this Cardinal or that, because of their attitudes, concerning certain policies of the European nations. Cardinals, who were anti-French were "vetoed" by the Kings of France. French Cardinals were forbidden to vote for a Cardinal who was pro-Spanish.

During the XVII century, for instance, when Spain, who until then had been the strongest European power, was crumbling, losing successively Portugal, the Netherlands and her possessions in France, lost also her influence inside the Conclaves.

France took the place of Spain in Rome. As a result, her influence upon the election of the Pope, became paramount. When Pope Clement X died (1670-1676) for instance, King Louis XIV, saw to it, that the Conclave should not dare to elect a Pope, of whom he did not approve.

The Conclave had been on the brink of doing just that. The King's envoy had not managed to arrive in Rome in time. The Cardinals had all agreed to elect a Cardinal Albizzi, as their new Pope. Then they panicked. The Conclave, which had been assembled on August 2nd, was adjourned, to permit the French contingent to arrive. They arrived at the Vatican on 29th, carrying the King's veto, and the King's choice. Cardinal Albizzi was discarded forthwith, and the Cardinal approved by the French King, was duly elected, Pope Innocent XI (1676-1689).

Cardinal Albizzi, the would-be Pope, put the situation in a nutshell. "The Holy Ghost used to be a dove." he commented, "Now he has become a cock." The cock, then being the emblem of France, as the eagle now is that of the USA.

During the last century, Austria exerted her right to a veto, as late as the beginning of the 20th century. Upon her disintegration, the veto vanished with her empire. There were occasions, when even Protestant Prussia, attempted to influence the Con-

claves. The "veto" as a historical instrument of political pressure, finally vanished altogether, after World War I.

To think, however, that it was no longer exerted, would be a mistake. Since, as we have already seen, political pressure, without any formal traditional veto, has remained as vigorous now as in the past.

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state, that, because of the political powers which are interested in the election of certain candidates, the pressure, upon contemporary Conclaves, is stronger even than that exerted by the old imperial nations of Europe.

The USA and Soviet Russia, although seemingly uninterested in the election of a new Pope, in fact, consider any papal election of supreme importance, to their policies.

Pressure from both superpowers, in a complex operation of ideological diplomatic and religious nature. It is exerted years before the death of a Pope, upon the Cardinal electors, and upon the Vatican itself.

Conclaves now, are "manipulated" even more than in the past.

The passing of Pius XI and the election of anti-Communist Pius XII, were due to political pressure. This had been characterized by his pro-American and anti-Russian stance, with all the political results, we have already assessed.

The election of an anti-Pius XII Cardinal, later Pope John XXIII, (1958-63) was also induced by an unwritten "veto" of Cardinals, and powerful political currents, outside the Conclave.

The same process was repeated with Paul VI. The election of his successor, proved no less dramatic, although his sponsors were no longer the kings or the emperors of old Europe.

The USA's eagerness to have a pro-American Pope, or at least a "neutral" one, no less than that of the Soviet Union, to have a pro-Marxist or at least a non-committed Pontiff, induced them, or at least their "operators" to commit even murder, as we shall see presently.

Their conflict, was no less dramatic than many of those of the past, since upon the election of the right or wrong Pope, there had depended the partial or even total success of their policies.

Chapter Thirteen

Murder in the Vatican throughout the centuries. Historical Papal "eliminations," sudden and planned Papal "demises." Suspicious Papal deaths.

According to a famous Roman legend, the bones of an accursed Pope, who, sought the Papacy unlawfully, rattle noisely in his marble coffin each time that a reigning Pontiff is near to death.

Sylvester II, became Pope in the year 1000 AD. The same year, when Christendom expected the end of the world. Since, there was going to be Armaggedon, Sylvester wanted to be the last Pope to sit on the throne of St. Peter.

Sylvester, however, had never believed in the end of the world. This was proved by the fact, that instead of preparing himself to meet the Lord, who would appear in January of the year 1000, to judge the quick and the dead, Sylvester had been busy preaching a crusade to free the Holy Land from the Saracens.

Sylvester, besides being a very pious Catholic, was also very learned. A fact, which many suspected, he had learned from the Devil himself. The most positive proof of his association with the Prince of Darkness was that he had set up an observatory, to spy the night sky.

He had set up the spying device in the La Lateran Palace, itself. Sylvester, the first Frenchman to become Pope, was mistrusted even more, because, he had been accused of selling his soul to Lucifer.

This he had done, it was affirmed, in order to persuade the Devil to help him to be elected Pope. The devil used his incantations with the Cardinals. At the end of the Conclave they were surprised to have elected, not only a Frenchman, but also a sorcerer and an unbeliever, to the throne of St. Peter.

One of the clauses which the Devil had imposed upon Syl-

vester had been absolute prohibition to go to Palestine, under pain of instant death.

It so happened that later, on one Sunday, Sylvester went to celebrate Mass in a church, called Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, the Holy Cross of Jerusalem. As soon as he set foot inside the church, a church by the way, which had been made even more sacred because Saint Helena had deposited the cross from Golgotha there, he collapsed.

Upon realizing how the Devil had betrayed him, Pope Sylvester confessed his crime, that is, selling his soul to buy the Papacy, and expired.

Since then, Pope Sylvester, has never rested properly. For whenever a Pope, is near death, or has been murdered, or poisoned, or stabbed, his bones rattle noisely. A sign thus indicating, how seriously ill, or how much in danger, the reigning pontiff is, or is going to be.

Thanks to that, the superstitious Roman populace, has known for certain, when a Pope is doomed, to some untimely death. Each time they hear the rattling of Sylvester's bones, inside his tomb in the Lateran, then the end of the reigning pontiff is near, or in many instances he is in danger of being murdered.

The progress towards the grave of any papal patient, was summed up by a typical Roman ditto: Malato, meglio, morto, which means—ill, better dead.

The bones of Sylvester, were heard to rattle, long before he became Pope. Since Popes were murdered, cut to death, in the street and poisoned centuries before his own election. The most colourful period of such papal adventures occurred during the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries.

The papacy, however, fared no better, after Sylvester's successors. The fear of murder, or better still of death by poisoning, remained a perennial danger, from the eleventh to the twentieth century.

Strangulation, another bloodless method, was also occasionally employed for papal riddance. Witness Pope Paul II (1464-1471) who was strangled in the dead of night, under the most sordid circumstances.

To prevent the truth of his untimely end from coming out,

rumours had it that he had died a cleaner death. Contemporary historians, in fact, informed posterity that the weight of a jewelled tiarra encrusted with jewels, had given him an apoplectic fit.

The infamous Spanish Popes, fared no better. Alexander VI (1492-1502) of legendary fame, for his orgies and boasting that he could "fill the Sistine Chapel with sacks of gold," met a death worthy of him. He died by drinking, by mistake, the poisoned wine which he had prepared for some of his guests.

His corpse, became almost immediately so black and so swollen, that it lost all resemblance to a human body. It soon emitted such a stench, that not even the grave diggers could suffer to bear it. When they tried to put it into a coffin, the coffin proved to be too small, because of ths swollen cadaver. The gravediggers had to trample and leap upon it, to force it inside.

The end of the Medici Pope, Leo X (1513-1521) was no better. He bought the papacy with immense bribes. He lived in perpetual succession of carnivals, plays, banquets and dancing. When on the point of death he refused to receive the last sacrament of the same church, of which he was Pope. During his lifetime he mocked religion, and had even declared he did not believe in God. He suffered also from venereal disease. He died a sudden death, after he had discovered a plot to poison him.

The plotters, led by Cardinal Petrucci, were arrested. Some were strangled, while others were dragged in the streets of Rome. Their flesh was torn from their bones with red-hot pincers, before they were hung on the Bridge of St. Angelo fortress.

The survivors, had their final revenge. They poisoned him.

Pope Paul III (1534-1549) was another Pope, whom Benevenuto Cellini, accused of believing in nothing "not even in God." Paul III was so vindictive, that he planned to assassinate the King of France, no more no less.

Evidence is still existent in the historical archives of Florence, that he intended to send the French King, a mechanical box, which discharged a number of poisoned shots, upon being opened.

The Duke of Florence, having heard of the Pope's murderous intention, prevented him from dispatching the deadly engine to the French King. Thereupon, the Pope attempted to poison the

Duke. He failed, but killed instead the Duke's close relation, Cardinal de Medici, who died an almost instant death, via papal poison.

Pope Urban VII (1590) who declared his intention to suppress the Jesuits, died within ten days of his election. It was declared that he died of a heart attack. His sudden collapse, however, indicated that he had been administered poison.

The suspicions were later confirmed under the reign of one of his successors, Pope Clement VIII, when a man confessed that he "had poisoned two previous Popes."

The Pope handed the man to the Inquisition, which, to prevent him from repeating his attempts with future Popes, disposed of him as the Inquisition used to do with heretics, by putting him to death.

Pope Gregory XIV (1590-1591) was strong and healthy. He died suddenly in 1591. It was suspected that he was poisoned by the agents of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, a famous specialist in potent poisons. The Duke had gone so far as to introduce some of his poisoned potions inside the very Conclave, which had elected Gregory XIV, whom he detested as his bitterest enemy.

Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605) died suddenly of a short illness in 1605. He lived in constant fear of being poisoned. In a secret dispatch of the envoy of the Duke of Ferrara, accredited to the Vatican, the envoy confirmed the Pope's fear.

"His Holiness," he wrote, "lives in perpetual dread of poison. His cook has received the most stringent orders never to allow a stranger into the papal kitchens. His Holiness even had one of his slippers burnt, after the Duke had kissed it."

The fear and the use of poison in the Vatican became so pervading, that for centuries fear crept even into the ceremonial and the religious ritual of the Church.

The precaution to prevent the use of poison against the Popes, via enemies, and friends alike, became so rooted, that it crept into the very Mass itself.

During the Pontifical Mass, for instance, a portion of the wine and water to be consecrated is poured into a cup and is drunk by an acolyte. For the same reason, three difrerent wafers are offered to the Cardinal-Deacon. One of such wafers, is put on a

paten, while the other two are swallowed by an attendant.

As if this was not enough, the Pope then breaks off two particles of the remaining wafer, which then he places on the tongue of the Deacon and sub-Deacon.

To such lengths the fear of planned murders, had gone inside the Vatican. The fear is still there, and is justified, as we shall have occasion to prove presently.

Chapter Fourteen

Political motivations for the mysterious deaths of two Popes. Conservative Europe against the Jesuit revolutionaries of the 18th Century. Historical precedents.

Whereas before, during and after the Renaissance, what motivated the poisoning of various Popes, was due to feudal, family and personal, financial or dynastic pursuits, centuries later, the motivation differed radically, and turned political.

The elimination of Pontiffs from then onwards was prompted by the belief, that their potential premature deaths, would solve political problems rendered insoluble by the personal belief of the reigning Pope.

The interested parties were no logner individuals, but vast collective bodies, religious, political or even economic, which wished to maintain or increase their influence in the running of governments.

Their growth into corporate organizations, therefore, made it imperative that certain forces at work be either channelled into a given religious and political direction or restrained from undermining the existing structure of society.

The Society of Jesus, after fulfilling its mission as a counter-reformation weapon, directed its energy against certain conservative establishments. Most of these were of a monarchical character, which the Jesuits came to consider, as hostile to their own expansion.

The conflict reached a climax during the 17th and 18th centuries, when the various monarchs of Europe complained to the Popes, that the Jesuits were preaching revolution, sponsoring unrest and nurturing elements, dedicated to the overthrow of the monarchical establishment.

The Jesuits, had become a kind of recent monarchy them-

selves, operating inside the ruling monarchs of Europe. An intangible entity outside the established powers of the day. They specialized in directing the powerful. They did this, via religion, and used religion for political objectives.

Every Catholic monarch, for instance, had a Jesuit adviser. No lady with social influence, was without a Jesuit confessor. That meant counsellor, not only in spiritual matters, but also in social and court problems. Thanks to that, they managed to influence, via their husbands, or fathers or relations, highly delicate situations, or even political matters. Because of such devious use of their influence, the Jesuits, eventually came to have a finger in every political pie in Europe.

Had they exercised their operation, within any given country, it would have been bad enough. But they interfered in the international relationships of many governments, without the least authorization. More often than not, they did this behind the backs of statesmen, kings, and even of the Church, and in secret.

England had been closed to them for more than a century; Russia had ejected them in 1777, while distant China had done likewise in 1753, forcibly closing their missions. The Jesuits' secretive operations had spread so widely that finally France, Catholic Austria, Portugal and even Spain, having come to the conclusion that they had become a true international menace, decided unanimously that they must be suppressed.

The Jesuits counteracted by preparing for the papal election of a pro-Jesuit cardinal; and attempted to influence the cardinal electors, whom they had as their penitents. The Conclave was penetrated by them. The result was that the Sacred College, prior to the election of the new Pope, was split in two: those who favoured the Jesuits, and those who wanted their suppression.

The Jesuits, managed to lobby for a Cardinal who supported them. But then they lost. A Pope, unfavourable to them, became Pope.

Later on, one of the Cardinals, of a Conclave, where the electors had voted against the Jesuits, was Clement XIII (1758-1769). Clement was not personally against the Jesuits. In fact, he revoked Pope Benedicts XVI's bill, approving the enquiry into the Jesuits' subversive operations in Portugal. Indeed, he even sup-

ported the Society, against the mounting request for its suppression.

The Catholic Monarchies of Europe, however, insisted that the Jesuits be disbanded and threatened the Pope.

Clement XIII, after endless indecision, postponements, and unconvincing delays, finally decided to do what he had been advised he should do. He capitulated.

He made ready a proclamation announcing the suppression of the Jesuit order. It was said that the document was written and was waiting for the day when it was to be made public. To the surprise of all, however, the Pope was suddenly attacked by a mysterious illness. He died on the 12th February (a coincidence in dates) 1769 with agonizing, unexplained convulsions.

Rumours had it that he had been poisoned. The suddenness of his affliction and the convulsions both pointed to it. The suspicions, however, were never proved. It was suggested by those in the know that the Pope had been made to die before he could publish the announcement of the official suppression of the Jesuit order.

The actual document itself vanished and was never seen again.

His successor, Pope Clement XIV, gave hints to the effect that certain political forces could not be halted. Prior even to his election, he had made some significant comments:

"The time has come," he had said, "for kings to be obeyed, since their arms stretch far beyond their frontiers, and their power can overtop the Alps."

Translated into contemporary terms, if we put right-wing dictators for kings, the historical parallel with the 1939 situation is a striking one.

Again, in July 1773, Pope Clement XIV wrote an order dissolving the Society of Jesus. This bull, Dominus ac Redemptor, was published 16th August of that year. After issuing it, however, the Pope relented, in fear of the consequences, and tried to withdraw it. Too late. The Spanish ambassador had already dispatched the document by special courier direct to Madrid.

The papal brief annihilated the Jesuit order throughout the

world, closed its schools, cancelled its statutes. Its houses were occupied and its General and other dignitaries were imprisoned.

As soon as Clement had signed the brief, he predicted his own end. "I am lost," he was heard to whisper. Afterwards, upon hearing the bells of Rome ring, he made another ominous comment; "They are not ringing for the saints, but for the dead."

He fell immediately into "a singular state of agonizing prostration, sunk under the weight of grief." On October 2, 1774, he died with great, unexplained suffering. His body decomposed so quickly that it was impossible to show his face, as was customary with a deceased Pope; and his funeral had to be hastened, omitting the traditional rites.

The Jesuits were universally accused of having had him poisoned. But once more, no proof was brought to the fore to substantiate such accusations.

The parallel with our times is too striking to be dismissed as mere literary innuendo. Not alone because of the similarity of the untimely deaths of two Popes, but because the two pontiffs, squeezed between two irresistible, hostile political forces, had their lives unexplicably shortened after they had witten documents having far-reaching political consequences.

To make the parallel more apt with the present century, it must be remembered that all this occurred on the eve of the French Revolution, when the traditional conservative world had begun to disintegrate and was already in a state of near collapse, very much as Western society in the 20th century.

The rising wind of oncoming revolution, was about to become a whirlwind which ended with the fall of the French monarchy and the rise of a new star, Napoleon.

The Church herself was struck by the revolutionary thunder. Churches were closed, her property seized, atheism proclaimed, her Cardinals and Bishops persecuted. The two papal successors to Clement XIV were sent into humiliating exile, first by the Revolution, then by Napoleon.

Although it is inappropriate to draw too close historical parallels, since history seldom repeats itself exactly, it is instructive nevertheless, to cast a glance at the past, to justify our specultion about the present.

What becomes evident is that in periods of great political pressures, when momentous historical decisions have to be made, Popes can still become subject to personal removal or, in reverse, of personal promotion, as we shall have the opportunity to see presently in the case of another contemporary papal election.

Papal decisions, for or against, certain current ideologies, can still influence great historical events. The present is not only a confirmation of the past, but a clear proof that similar crises may well evoke similar solutions.

The dominant issue during the 18th century, of course, was not Fascism versus Communism, but between their equivalents, the Monarchists who championed contemporary society of their day and the Jesuits, who were considered the most insidious eroders of the traditional establishment.

The Jesuits had come to be regarded as so dangerous that all the traditional forces were arrayed against them. This not so much because they had been adjudged subversives as that they had managed to infiltrate the infrastructures of European society with the same skill, cunning and efficiency as that of their Marxist counterparts in our day.

Chapter Fifteen

The missing testament of a dying Pope. The mysterious death of a 20th Century Pontiff. Dramatic results of his "demise." Preliminary plot, before World War Two.

To believe that the unexplained deaths of the Popes of the recent past are things which cannot happen today is not only incorrect. It is a dangerous misconception. If applied to our contemporary problems, it might make us dismiss certain events, which actually have happened, as impossible, because of their unusualness.

One of such impossible events, would be the proposition, that the life of a contemporary Pope, could be "shortened" or even purposely "terminated," because of ideological objectives or political motivations.

And yet the basic circumstances of such an "impossible" deed, would be not dissimilar to those which occurred in the past. The demise of the two Popes, whom we have just seen, was carried out because of the basic conflict between the revolutionary forces against the conservative ones of their times.

Today the same basic conflict is far more formidable in its extent, nature and objectives, than those of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Then their territories were confined to Europe, their battlefield was restricted to the establishment of a Monarchial Continent, confronting an ambitious religious order, dreaming of setting up a theocracy, controlled by the church and directed by an inner spiritual directorate peculiarly its own.

In short, the traditional establishment of the 18th century, when faced by the potential dictatorship of the Jesuits, had reacted, by waging total war against them.

Total war, meant the participation of the Church herself.

This spelled that of the Pope. Hence the Pope's involvement, and his personal participation, in the defense, not only of certain religious values, but also of social ones. The defense of both brought the Church and the Pope to the defense of political objectives then dominating the society of their times.

The involvement of a contemporary Pope in the problems of our times, is no less perilous. Since the Church, at present is more involved in them than ever in the past.

The inspirational factors of the political problems of European and world politics during most of the 20th Century, have been Marxism and Fascism.

The Vatican became embroiled in the process, until its own ideological and ecclesiastic conduct, was molded in its association with both ideologies.

Since the latter provoked a mutual antagonism, the Vatican was willy-nilly, compelled to take sides. That spelt a definite political stance. Hence the Vatican's obligation to support one or the other. Its attempt at neutrality proved ineffective, from the start.

After the Russian Revolution, it sided with the rising Fascism. The then-reigning Pope, Pius XI, in fact, as we have already seen, going so far as to call the founder of Fascism "the man sent by Divine Providence."

Pius XI, however, with the rise of Nazism, rejected his earlier support of both. In the eyes of many Catholics, that was a mistake.

Vatican diplomats, disagreed with Pius XI, since most of them saw in Fascism, a natural ally of the Church in her fight against Bolshevism and Atheism.

One of such diplomats was Msgr. Eugenio Pacelli, the future anti-Communist Pope Pius XII. (1939-1958)

Prior to becoming Pope, Pius XII had been a prominent Vatican Diplomat, in Germany.

Eugenio Pacelli had watched the activities and strategems of the leftist churchmen with the silent alertness of an ideological tiger, ready to strike with feline effectiveness.

As a former Papal Nuncio to Germany during and after World War I, he had seen the rise of both Bolshevism and Nazism.

If there was a man who knew the nature and objectives of each, he was that man. He had dealt personally with both systems when these were still young. Indeed, Pacelli at one time (1924-25) had even negotiated with Lenin on behalf of the Pope, with a view of supplanting the Russian Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church.

He had witnessed first-hand the birth and rise of Nazism and, after some doubts as to its ultimate objectives, had helped to bring about its ascendancy in Europe.

To Pacelli, then Secretary of State under Pope Pius XI, the ideological maneuvers of the pro-Russian Catholics within the Vatican were easily suppressed. He smothered them with an ecclesiastical velvet pillow, by displacements, relegation to obscurity, and the promise of advancement.

To the most obstinate, he precluded entry to the Pope's study and made the papal ear unapproachable to their advice, claims or ideas. As Secretary of State, the Vatican had become his domain and the Pope his ideological prisoner, so far as the pro-Communist elements within the Church were concerned.

He was too close to the real seat of power to permit the radical activists to carry on their work. Also, he was an exceptionally subtle politician, a clever career diplomat, ruthlessly determined to promote his own policies, all dedicated to total war against Communism.

At this particular period, he exerted tremendous influence upon the ideological and diplomatic structure of the Church. This was due chiefly to the fact that he had been the principal formulator of the Vatican grand strategy, at the right hand of the preceeding Pope during the previous ten years—1929-1939.

Indeed, it was owing chiefly to him that, as previously noted, in January 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, the Fuehrer appointed Franz von Papen as his Vice-Chancellor.

Cardinal Pacelli saw to it that the leftists' programmes were all defused before they could interfere with the continuation of his own personal diplomacy. Pius XI could not, so to speak, free himself from the pro-Nazi straight-jacket into which his Secretary of State had put him.

Notwithstanding this, the pro-Communist Catholics, par-

ticularly in France, Czechoslovakia and Italy, continued to work for a change of ideological direction in the Vatican. Even if the Church did not become pro-Communist, at least a policy of active neutrality would have benefitted Soviet Russia, since the withdrawal of Vatican support for Nazism would have profound political effect by influencing millions of Catholics throughout Europe, especially those living in Slavonic countries bordering Russia.

Despite Pacelli's overwhelming influence, the left-wing faction appeared to gain strength as the Pope's attitude towards Nazism continued to worsen. This became apparent when Hitler went to visit Rome.

Instead of receiving him as he had received other heads of State, Pius XI snubbed the Fuehrer and left the Vatican purposely to avoid meeting him. To add insult to injury, he went so far as to call Hitler a modern Nero.

As Nazi Germany was rapidly heading for war, Pius XI prepared to issue a public statement officially condemning Nazi aggression. The move would have had a tremendous political impact, since millions of Catholics, many of whom until then had supported the right-wing regimes because of their Church's approval, would have hesitated to furnish assistance to Hitler, once the Pope had spoken against him.

Soviet Russia became greatly interested in the whole business, and certain prelates who were known for their pro-Russian sympathies, were contacted. One of these, an obscure diplomat posted to the Bosphorus, was Msgr. Roncalli, later to become Pope John XXIII.

Piux XI prepared a special testament or document in which he denounced both Hitler and Mussolini and their preparations for war. Having done that, he convoked all the bishops of Italy to Rome. The statement was going to be read by the Pope himself on the 12th of February 1939.

Mussolini and Hitler, who had both heard of it, waited with mounting apprehension. Would the millions of Catholics listen to what the Pope was saying? On the eve of the Second World War, this was of immense importance. Upon its outcome there might depend the decision Hitler would make as to whether he would or

could begin hostilities.

Pius XI, however, had become very ill. Forty-eight hours before the day he was to make his pronouncement, he was on the brink of death. He begged his doctors to do all in their power to keep him alive until the 12th of February.

"I want to warn Catholics everywhere not to support Hitler and Mussolini," he kept repeating. "It might help to stop the outbreak of the war. Let me live another forty-eight hours."

The doctors did their best. Or did they? Ugly rumors that Fascist and Nazi intelligence had a hand in the "timely" death of the Pontiff were never substantiated. The stark fact, however, was that on the morning of the 10th of February 1939, only two days before he could deliver his anti-Nazi, anti-Fascist condemnation, the repentant Pius XI died.

The mere hint that the Pope might have been murdered in the 20th century, sounds absurd. In view of what was at stake however, and also in view of what had occurred a few decades later, with another contemporary Pope, the assumption, is not only valid, it is also most plausible.

When seen retrospectively, it is acceptable, and no longer a political speculation. The fact is, that Pius XI wrote a political will, whose publication would have caused a political commotion of the first magnitude.

Why was the will concealed? Or why was it destroyed? Furthermore, by whom? And last but not least, what became of the dramatic Pius XI's denunciation of Nazism?

This is not a rhetorical question, or a demand for clarification of what at first sight might appear to be a simple footnote to ecclesiastical history. The very issue of peace or war might have depended to some extent upon its timely disclosure.

That this is no exaggeration is proved by the fact that the dying Pope, once he realized how near was his end, had begged the Secretary of State to have his last will and testament published, even after his death.

Before his premature demise, he had had the contents of the will printed at the Vatican's own press, *in secret*. The purpose of the printing and of the secrecy was to have the document ready before anyone hostile to its contents should prevent it from

becoming known.

Pius XI's concern about the testament, at that particular period, was fully justified. A solemn declaration from the Vatican against the unrestrained belligerence of Hitler would have had an incalculable effect upon the political balance of Europe at that time.

Again, it must be recalled that a word from the Pope could have upset the political support of almost one-third of the Germans, who were devout Catholics, to say nothing of the millions of Italians and others in Europe and the Americas. Even in the United States, there were a number of extreme right-wing Catholics, as for example, the energetic Father Coughlin and his supporters.

The uncertainty as to the reaction of German Austria and the many Catholics within the territories occupied by Hitler at that time, might have forced the Fuehrer to reconsider his immediate war plans. This could have compelled him to postpone the date of his attack on Poland—September 1939, the outbreak of World War II.

Another factor of extreme importance at this stage of European history was that of Soviet Russia. Before Hitler's attack on Poland, Russia had been negotiating with England and France in efforts to form a military alliance against Hitler. The negotiations had been elaborate and devious on both sides, but had been especially difficult because of the attitude of a suspicious Stalin.

It is certain that had the Pope's denunciation of Nazism been published the previous February when Pius XI had planned for it to be, the anti-Nazi front would have been greatly strengthened, thus encouraging Russia to sign a pact with the Western powers.

This did not occur. The Soviets suspected the West and with it the Vatican, of playing a double game and of playing for time. It must be remembered that Hitler at this period appeared to hold the mightiest military power of Europe, as in fact the course of events later proved he did. Certain elements within England, France and even the U.S., wanted Hitler to attack Russia, not only to destroy Communism, but equally to divert Hitler's armies away from Europe.

Stalin knew this very well; and, fearing a sudden pre-

emptive attack from Nazi Germany, much to the chagrin of Communists everywhere, he signed a mutual pact of non-aggression with Hitler. The Berlin-Moscow Axis was born.

That incongruous Axis had a very brief life, it is true. But it suited both partners at the time, each of whom was playing his own game. The Hitler-Stalin Pact upset the balance of power in Europe, making the outbreak of World War II inevitable.

Hitler and Mussolini, for all their posturing, were well aware of the political influence the Vatican could exert in world affairs. After all, both had been helped to power by this same Vatican. If the Vatican could help their accession, it could also contribute to their downfall.

Vague rumors of Pius XI's intentions had reached the ears of the Fascist, Nazi and Soviet intelligence. It was even said that the Russians, knowing what was afoot, had waited for the Vatican's anti-Hitler pronouncement before formulating their policies vis-a-vis England, France, and Germany. This was never proved, but it could be historically correct. The timing of the unexplained change of Russia towards the Allies and the commencement of the Hitler-Stalin Pact was too sudden to be a mere coincidence.

At any rate, the fact remained that Pius XI died his untimely death. Also, that the very few people near him who knew about the document, kept unaccountably silent.

Chapter Sixteen

Enigma of the death of an anti-Nazi Pope. The "rigged" election of his successor. The accusing silence of the Vatican. Contradictory evidence about the Pope's last illness. Grave suspicions about the cause of his "timely" end. Visible evidence—poison.

One of the persons who had individual access to the papal study was the Pope's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pacelli. It must be recalled that he was the same man who had steered the German Catholic Party to an entente with the Nazi Party, thus helping Hitler to power and who, only three months after Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany, had given orders for the German Catholic Party to dissolve itself, the better to pave Hitler's way to political absolutism.

In the confusion of the interregnum of the Vatican—that is, during the period which has to elapse between the death of one Pope and the election of another—the secret of the missing testament remained well guarded. Rumours leaked out, but were soon forgotten in the rush of important events on the world stage. Hitler was careering ever more rapidly to the verge of war.

Cardinal Pacelli, as Pope Pius XII, saw to it, that the will of Pius XI, be never discussed or even mentioned. Indeed, the item became a forbidden subject. The turmoil of the outbreak of World War II did the rest.

But if the lost testament of the dead Pope, seemed to have been buried with him, several individuals outside the Vatican never forgot the late Pope's fateful will: Count dalla Torre, Editor of the *L'osservatore Romano* rumours; a young Vatican prelate, Monsignor Montini (later Pope Paul VI); and yet another, a devout Catholic priest and friend of the present author, Dom. Luigi Sturzo.

Dom Sturzo had been the founder and leader of the first

Catholic Party of Italy, just after the First World War. Following the Second World War, the party, which was renamed Christian Democratic Party, ruled Italy for 33 consecutive years until 1977, when they had to agree to a "historical compromise" with the Italian Communists, the latter being then the second largest political party in the country.

Dom Sturzo knew the Pope very well indeed. The Catholic Party had been created with the Pontiff's personal help. And eventually it was disbanded by the same Pope's personal command. (1926-7).

This occured when Pius XI, having finally decided to cooperate with Mussolini, began his secret negotiations with him, negotiations which resulted in the signing of a Concordat and the solution of the Roman Question in 1929. The chief negotiator was a brother of Monsignor Pacelli, the future Secretary of State under Pius XI.

The significant thing about all this was that Pius XI, who had been prompted also by his papal nuncio in Germany, after having called Mussolini "the man sent by divine Providence," complied with Mussolini's request to suppress the Catholic Party. Hence Pius's ordering Dom Sturzo to dissolve the Party two years before completion of the secret Vatican-Mussolini negotiations. Dom Sturzo went immediately into exile.

There was never any bitterness between the two men. Dom Sturzo, who was considered a "progressive" understood the Popes strategy. He was, however, always hopeful that the Pope would one day see his mistake. That, in fact, was what eventually happened. Because of this mutual understanding, Dom Sturzo remained in close contact with Pius.

When finally Pius XI turned against the Fascist and Nazi dictators, he kept Dom Sturzo informed of the fact: not only of his change of attitude, but also of his forthcoming open condemnation of totalitarianism, giving him the precise date of the papal bombshell.

These facts were revealed to the present author by Dom Sturzo himself on two occasions. The first was when the Italian leader lived in London in the summer of 1939, and the second in the early spring of 1940, after World War II had begun.

With the exception of a tiny circle in Rome, no one else knew of the anti-Fascist testament of Pope Pius XI.

The reason? A few weeks later, on March 2, 1939, the defunct Pontiff's anti-Communist Secretary of State, Cardinal Pacelli, was elected Pope. He became Pius XII. His immediate order, upon ascending the Chair of Peter: that his papal predecessor's wish concerning an anti-Hitler pronouncement must be totally and permanently forgotten.

And so it was, throughout his long pontificate.

Certain facts, however, about the missing papal testament, and the equivocal circumstances of its disappearance, are still unexplained.

All the printed copies vanished from the Vatican's printing plant, "minutes" before the Pontiff expired.

But even more telling, the original manuscript, disappeared mysteriously from the papal desk. Its vanishing is even more interesting, because it was written in the Pope's own hand.

The enigma was never clarified by any positive disclosure.

The "positive evidence" of the whole strange affair, however, was the fact that the only man, who had access to the dead Pope's study, was Cardinal Pacelli. As Secretary of State, he had had access to the Pope's study, and had the amplest liberty of movement. In fact, when the Pope became indisposed, he had the key of the study itself. No one else could enter into it simply because Cardinal Pacelli, by possessing the key, prevented even the most intimate people who looked after the Pope, like nuns and domestics, from getting even near it.

The study had been locked, even before the Pope died. The testament had been left upon the desk, by the Pope, before he retired to bed. It had been seen by more than one individual, who, later on, were puzzled by the news of its mysterious disappearance.

Cardinal Tiserant, Dean of the Sacred College, and an intimate confident of the Pope, had been one of them. Count dalla Torre, who had been asked to print the document against the Nazis, was another.

The testament, the Count had reported, was on the desk of the Pope, when he had gone into the Pope's study, to bring him

the proof of the anti-Fascist declaration. The Pope's document was a letter addressed to all the Bishops of Italy.

An individual who could see the Pope, with frequency, of course, was his official doctor, Dr. Petacci who, later on, was to play a most ambiguous role, immediately after the Pope's demise.

Dr. Petacci had the unusual distinction of being the father of the mistress of Fascist dictator, Mussolini. The spying tentacles of the Fascist intelligence could reach the Pope's study, via another two individuals, whose freedom of action, to operate in the Vatican, was unusual, if not exceptional.

One of these was an intimate of Cardinal Pacelli, a Msgr. Umberto Benigni, who acted as Pacelli's secretary. Benigni operated not only for the Secretary of State. He was a Fascist spy, an official of none other than the OVRA, the Fascist Secret Police, as it was officially disclosed after World War II.

An additional, no less interesting person, was another clergyman, a Msgr. Enrico Pucci, who reported regularly to Mussolini. The two prelates' reports were fed to the Gestapo, and thus from there to Hitler.

It is more than probable that the Gestapo had its own agents, near the Pope. Or, at least, that it used the agents of the OVRA as "specialized" informers, concerning Pius XI's anti-Fascist intentions.

The speculation is not unfounded. The Fascist Secretary of State, Count Ciano, son-in-law of Mussolini, later recorded in his diary that Mussolini did not know anything about the Pope's anti-Fascist Testament. Count Ciano was executed by Hitler.

Pius's diplomatic operations had been of extreme importance, in the febrile months, preceding the outbreak of the Second World War. Hitler must have received reports of the mission of Cardinal Verdier of Paris, who had approached the Pope, with definite instructions, directly from the French Government. These concerned the secret negotiations which had been going on between France and the Soviet Union. The latter, was being snubbed by the Western Powers, concerning a pact, between England, France and Soviet Russia, against Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

The supreme importance of knowing on which side the

Vatican was, or which power it was going to support, before the hostilities, was obvious.

The fact, that Mussolini did not know about the Pope's anti-Nazi testament, proved that the Gestapo had kept him purposely misinformed about Pius's dramatic decision.

The Gestapo's lack of confidence in Mussolini was a justified one. They knew that Mussolini would have rejected the idea of the murder of the Pope. Mussolini, for all his individual bragadoccio, had a personal liking for Pius XI. Besides which, Mussolini would have thought the risk of such an adventure too perilous. Since any disclosure of his participation in the assassination of the Pope, would have been fatal in a country like Italy, where Catholicity was deeply rooted. The adventure might have made his regime totter, indeed, collapse altogether.

It is obvious that the Gestapo were ordered, to accelerate their operation, once they were told how the Pope had decided to publish the anti-Nazi Testament. The publication had to be stopped at all cost, before the negotiation with Russia, France and England had succeeded.

Dr. Petacci's behaviour, when recollected retrospectively by Cardinal Tisserant and others, became a curious one. He seemed to have started to act, all of a sudden, with extreme circumspection, like one who knew he was being watched. He also became unduly resentful, when additional physicians were brought in, or were consulted. He wished to be present, when they were there, or listened to their suggestions sceptically. More than once, he even prevented them from approaching the Pope, or indeed, from letting them carry out examinations.

He became inexplicably nervous whenever another doctor appeared on the scene. He strongly objected to new consultants. In spite of his opposition, specialists were summoned, with increasing frequency.

At one time, as Cardinal Confalonieri, later declared, between seven and eight doctors, had been consulted above the head of Dr. Petacci. Four of these were asked to remain in semi-permanent attendance to the Pope, in addition to two nurse friars.

The condition of the papal patient had been reasonable and

"fair" when, between the 8th and 9th February, the Pope became suddenly very ill. Cardinal Pacelli and Msgr. Tardini, the two pro-Secretaries of State were alerted and asked to be ready "for the worst."

In the evening the Pope seemed to have recovered and to be "well."

Then at 5:30 in the morning of the following day, he suddenly died.

Cardinal Tisserant was shattered. Everybody on hearing of the sudden death, was surprised. Yet nobody appeared to have actually seen the Pope dying. He had died with no witnesses. Or so it had seemed to be. The only person who was known to have had access to the papal apartment immediately prior to the Pope's death, as far as it became known, had been Dr. Petacci.

But the most extraordinary thing of all was that an order for an immediate "embalming" had been given, long before anybody had known of the Pope's death. By whom, it was never discovered.

Later, rumours had it, that it had been given by Cardinal Tisserant.

Cardinal Tisserant, however, never did anything of the kind. Indeed, prior to the news of the Pope's death, he had asked about the condition of Pius XI and had been assured that the papal patient was faring "not so badly."

As the night and then the morning arrived, Cardinal Tisserant, had enquired once more, about the condition of the Pope. This time he was told that his condition had become "serious."

Cardinal Tisserant accepted the news, with mounting anxiety. The importance of this second enquiry, however, assumed a most sinister meaning once it became known that the Cardinal had been told that the condition of the Pope had become serious, 49 minutes AFTER the Pope had already been dead.

Furthermore, it came to light, that during the interval, that is during the secret 49 minutes, preparatory measures had been taken, for the actual embalming of the body.

The importance of such measures, can be assessed, not only because they had been ordered without the knowledge of the Cardinal or of anybody else, but equally, because they had been

taken, by a person or persons unknown.

The secret operators, have remained a secret ever since. One thing, however, became common knowledge during the whole curious unfolding of subsequent events. Apart from the anonymous individuals who had carried out the preliminary injections for the embalming, the only known individuals to enter into the papal bedroom, had been Dr. Petacci and Cardinal Pacelli.

Cardinal Tisserant could not comprehend what had happened. The more so, since he discovered how he had been notified of the death of the Pope 49 minutes after the Pope had actually died. He was immensely grieved. The more so, when, after he had been permitted to see the corpse, he had noticed, as did many others, how the face of Pius XI, was not only still slightly "distorted," but had strange bluish markings all over it. Some of these seemed to have been rendered less blue, by a kind of powder which had been put over them.

The suspicions that the Pope had not died a "natural" death, occurred to many. Some expressed their thoughts with the utmost caution, since the very idea had been unseemingly daring.

Amongst these, there was Cardinal Tisserant himself. The Cardinal was so upset, and became so openly suspicious, that he talked about having an "immediate" examination of the body. He was promptly refused under specious pretexts. More than that, he was told, that any potential autopsy was out of the question, and that anyway, no examination, whatsoever, would be permitted.

A refusal of a papal autopsy, under very suspicious circumstances, which were to be eventually repeated, a few decades later, with the curious death of another Pope, as we shall see presently.

Cardinal Tisserant persisted in his suspicions of foul play, and said openly so, going so far as to say that the whole thing had been stage-managed, and that the otherwise unexplained delay, between the death of the Pope and the announcement of his demise, had been a ploy, to carry out the preliminary embalming. The reason? To prevent an immediate examination of the body.

The time lapse of 49 minutes had obviously been used by those in the plot, to suppress all visible evidence, or even any

possible traces of poisoning.

It became evident, at once, that the secret and hurried embalming, with the ensuing injection of embalming fluids into the body, had been carried out, to stultify any potential findings, had an autopsy taken place.

Cardinal Tisserant expressed the desire for an examination of the body. Indeed, for an unofficial autopsy. The opposition which he encountered, astounded him. In his own words, the opposition had been "stony," "anonymous" and "impassable."

The precedent for the refusal of another autopsy of another dead Pope, who died in even more mysterious circumstances, three decades later.

Cardinal Tisserant, never recovered from the shock. For years, he remained under a kind of incubus, and was heard to repeat again and again the same refrain, in French, "Ils lont assassine" — They have assassinated him, they have assassinated him.

This accusation was never proved. But the fact that the Pope's face had become covered all over with bluish marks, in spite of the "secret" injections it had received, during the missing 49 minutes, might have indicated, even if tangentially, that the Cardinal, might have been right, after all.

Tisserant kept a voluminous diary about the whole affair, and recorded every detail of it. Before he died on 21st February 1972, he arranged that the diaries be taken away from Rome. And indeed, out of Italy altogether.

His fear, as he confided to his intimate friends, was that the Vatican might seize them after his death and thus destroy the revelations they contained, about Pope Pius XI's demise. Such revelations, he often explained, if revealed, would rock the Vatican on its foundations.

Because of such fears, he ordered that the diaries be taken to France. Then, fearful that even there they might be seized via ecclesiastic pressure, he decided that the country outside the reach of the Church was Switzerland. There, a priest locked the papers in the vault of a Swiss Bank.

Tisserant's documents have been there ever since. They will be published sometime during the next century.

Chapter Seventeen

Soviet spies and Vatican observers. The Nazi Gestapo and the KGB inside the Vatican. Importance of their operations. The man who was ordered to kill Lenin. The smiling head of the KGB and his predictions about the Pope of the future.

Nations fight not only with armies but also with the intricate mechanisms of intelligence, popularly known as spying. The mightier the nations, the mightier their intelligence systems. The more autocratic their governments, the more ruthless their covert activities. Communist Russia under Stalin had the most formidable espionage system in the world; the Roman Catholic Church, the most experienced. When the two met, therefore, there was bound to be a clandestine battle of heroic proportions.

Each system, staffed by masters of their respective crafts, has to exert itself to the best of its ability to outwit the rival. For, upon the success or failure of a given mission might depend the outcome of policies affecting not only current issues, but also the promotion of each side's grand strategies. Because of this, it became imperative for both Rome and Moscow that the intentions and plans of the opponent be known as accurately as possible, the better to assess the next move and thus to be in a position to formulate meant to counteract them.

Such an objective implied the penetration of each other's intelligence apparatus. The two systems were unique, sharing in equal measure as they did, the same rigidity and flexibility—two factors which permitted them to inter-penetrate each other with a subtlety denied to other espionage systems that were lacking in the messianis motivation of Catholicism and Communism.

The singular nature of each was that each represented something peculiar to itself: an autocracy sponsoring a world ideology

in the case of Soviet Russia; and a theocracy radiating a global religion in the case of the Vatican.

Each was a monolith; rigid, immovable, and unbreakable, the enforcers of conformity, of collective acceptance of ideological or religious formulae, outside which there was no salvation.

Both theocracy and autocracy have always excommunicated those who dared to dissent. It is their nature to do so; hence the authoritarianism and the theocracy of the present are but slightly modified replicas of those of the past.

Stalin had dissident Trotsky expelled from Soviet Russia because Trotsky, even though he was one of the saints of the Bolshevik Revolution, had failed to conform and thus became an outcast from a rigidly organized Communist Party. Political deviationism is the secular equivalent of religious heresy.

Not only was Trotsky expelled from the Party, he was even eliminated physically, when Stalin ordered his assassination in 1940.

The murder of Trotsky provoked accusation and counter-accusation as to its real inspirer, for almost two generations. Although the most plausible author of the crime would obviously be Stalin, proof of his culpability was not brought to the fore until forty years later, when those individuals who had carried out the homicide came into public view.

The assassin, one Ramon Mercader, was exalted as a Communist hero by Soviet Russia. During an official ceremony attended by the top Communist leaders, held in Moscow in February 1977, he was officially declared a Hero of the Soviet Union and awarded the Gold Star, an equivalent to the Victoria Cross in England.

Pius XII dealt in a similar manner with Catholic dissidents. He had them ecclesiastically executed; e.g., the Catholics who dared to vote for the Communists in 1948 and 1949 elections; or Cardinal Suhard of Paris, the inspirer of the worker priests; or scientist-philosopher Theilhard de Chardin because of his revolutionary theories.

Theocracy and autocracy, being twin brothers, both use ruthless suppression when dealing with their opponents, or when it comes to operating their espionage systems, whose tentacles

embrace the world.

Catholic and Communist intelligence networks have another feature in common. Unlike other intelligence systems, they offer their operatives rewards which are transcendental and beyond the reach of any other spying system based upon weak patriotism or financial guerdon.

The Nazi intelligence apparatus before and during World War II, was no less motivated. The fanaticism of the Nazi spying system, was inspired by transcendental objectives to match those of their Bolshevick and Vatican counterparts.

Their penetration of the Vatican prior to World War II, therefore, had been something which had transcended a mere intelligence operation. It had been inspired by their belief, that, to save Nazi Germany from a political and hence a military disaster, it had become their duty, to eliminate the Pope.

Pius XI, in their eyes, had become the major obstacle of Nazism's plans. He was going to interfere with the political structure of Europe, by aligning hundreds of millions of Catholics against Germany. Also by helping to cement the forces of France, England, and America against the Axis Powers.

Since the decision to carry on such policies depended upon the personal decision of one single man, that is of the Pope, it had become their duty to eliminate the individual, upon which there depended the transformation of the political map of the continent.

On the eve of the outbreak of a world war, this had become of supreme importance. The life of one single individual was minimal, indeed unimportant. Better that one man should perish, than whole nations doomed.

The reasoning was justified. Since history, ancient and modern, has proven that often, the conviction of one single individual can sway mass movements and historical happenings of tremendous import.

We have already mentioned the assassination of Leon Trotsky. Stalin knew that had Trotsky lived, the Trotzkist movement could have influenced the course of the war, and also of the post-war period. The assassination of Trotsky deprived his movement of the driving force, which had become a serious menace to the Soviet Union.

To believe that the Gestapo, or that the KGB, or the CIA, for that matter are unique in the carrying out of secret executions, would be as great a mistake as to believe that the Intelligence apparati of democracies can be no less ruthless, when national security is concerned.

The working of the intelligence system of Soviet Russia is varied. It can be operated with extreme sophistication. The present author had a taste of its seemingly innocous, but far-reaching methods on more than one occasion.

After the War, he became friendly with one Vladimir, the first Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in London. The Ambassador at that time was Andri Gromyko, later Secretary of State, and the most veteran Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union for more than five decades.

Vladimir was the head of the KGB. When the present author hinted that he had guessed that it was so, Vladimir had smiled with a hurt innocence. Such speculations, he replied, were unworthy of the present author. In spite, or perhaps because of that, they never discussed political matters. Their topics were confined strictly upon cultural items.

Very often, we arranged local excursions outside London, or patronized ethnic restaurants in Soho. One day, Vladimir hinted that he would like to visit an English fair, encamped on Wimbledon Common, just outside London.

Having arrived there, he and the writer mounted the brightly-painted wooden horses of the merry-go-round, seemingly for a lark. As the carousel revolved, however, Vladimir pointed to some grey, Edwardian buildings in the distance and asked very casually, if the author's friend who lived there, was faring well.

It so happened that the grey buildings he indicated comprised the Vatican's legation in Great Britain. The papal legate, the unofficial ambassador of the Pope, obviously lived there. But it happened also that the author had known him well for years. He was Msgr. Godfrey, later archbishop of Liverpool and finally Cardinal and Primate of Great Britain. He was an unassuming, cultured, and highly diplomatic individual with whom the author had discussed the Church's role in world affairs, while researching material for his book, *The Vatican in World Politics*.. Very

few persons had known of these conversations with the prelate.

One another occasion, Vladimir mentioned the name of Sir Bruce Lockhart. His curiosity concerning Lockhart seemed a pointless one at the time. Viewed in retrospect, however, it made sense, as it was clearly a long-range intelligence pointer, full of hidden, explosive charges.

Lockhart was no obscure personality. During World War II he had become Deputy Undersecretary of State at the British Foreign Office, and finally Director General of the Political Warfare Executive, from 1941 to 1945. The author had met him socially during and after the war, once in the office of Mr. Eduard Benes, the Czech Prime Minister in London; and several times with St. John Philby, famous Arabist and father of the no-less celebrated Kim Philby, spy of the century, as he later turned out to be.

Sir Bruce Lockhart had been a well-known British intelligence agent before and after the Bolshevik Revolution, In 1918, he had been sent to Russia by Lloyd George, then British Prime Minister, to establish contact with Lenin and Trotsky—not to bring about their downfall, but, on the contrary, as he himself wrote, "because he was in favour of intervention by the Allies (then at war with Germany) on the side of the Bolsheviks."

The Allies, at this period of the 1914-1918 war, consisted of Britain, France, the United States, Russia, and others.

Allied policy did not support Sir Bruce's desire to aid the Bolsheviks, and, under orders, he sent a British force of about one thousand men to Archangel to help the counterrevolutionary movements, which were trying to keep Russia in the war.

The result of such contradictory activities was that he came undersuspicion from all sides, and became entangled in accusations and counter-accusations, of plots and counterplots, which he could never openly explain. The last straw was his implication in an attempted assassination of Lenin himself. The charge this time was too much, even for the Bolsheviks. He was arrested and shut in the Kremlin.

It so happened that one of Lenin's comrades, Maxim Litvinov, at this time was "diplomatic agent" for the Bolsheviks in London. The British promptly arrested him as a hostage and told

Lenin that Litvinovf would be released on one condition: instant freedom for Sir Bruce. The two men were set at liberty one month later.

At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, he rejoined Britian's Political Intelligence Department. It was there that the author originally met him, introduced by one of Churchill's war ministers, Hugh Dalton, then responsible for broadcasts to guerrillas in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Vladimir's mention at this juncture of Sir Bruce, a spent intelligence force, although seemingly innocuous, had a hidden significance, since it was at this very period that the author had also met Kim Philby, the son of St. John Philby, then engaged in triple intelligence activity in a network which spanned Washington and Moscow. A few years afterwards, the whole affair exploded into one of the major intelligence scandals of the mid-twentieth century.

Vladimir's conversations made it clear to the author that he knew all about St. John Philby's activities in the Middle East; the influence which he had exercised in the formulation of Britain's policies during and after World War I; and his disputes with his opponent, the legendary Lawrence of Arabia, whom he once had succeeded in the British Mandate of Palestine as High Commissioner.

He knew also something which St. John Philby had told the author in strictest confidence: how Lawrence of Arabia, while posing as the Arab's champion, had gone to London in secret, at least on two occasions, "to confer with Churchhill and the Zionists," who were then planning the future state of Israel, even before the end of World War I. In addition, Vladimir referred to other episodes which Philby had never put into writing, then or afterwards.

Vladimir suspected that the elder Philby was still a great influence at the Foreign Office and in Mecca, Arabia, a sort of grey eminence of Middle East politics.

The son was introduced to the author by the elder Philby at the Atheneum Club in London. Kim Philby was a quiet-spoken, typical public school boy, possibly a former boat-racing defender of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, or an excellent amateur

cricket player. Politics was never mentioned. It seemed hardly worthy of discussion.

Vladimir's reaction to this writer's reaction to Kim Philby was typically a sophisticated one. Seen in retrospect, it was also one charged with a very far-reaching intelligence objective.

He asked, as casually as ever, whether Lockhart's triple role—i.e., at first, helping the Bolsheviks, then aiding their enemies, and then being implicated in an assassination attempt against Lenin—could be repeated.

The author's reply brought a mysterious smile to Vladimir's face:

"Yes, provided there is the right man."

Such a reply to such an apparently hypothetical question, representing to the author a mere abstraction, was at that particular moment, linked by Vladimir with a very concrete, far-reaching operation.

It was at this time that Kim Philby, having climbed the career ladder to the top of British and American intelligence, was spinning his most subtle web between London, Washington, and Moscow, acting as one of Soviet Intelligence's chief double or treble agents.

A few years later, he was almost caught. The KGB prevented his arrest by helping him to escape to Moscow, where he has lived ever since.

Vladimir, as a ranking Soviet official, had not asked a silly question nor hypothesized a situation. He was dealing, however obliquely, with a real situation.

Vladimir, later it turned out, had been operating not only in Great Britain; his field of business had been the whole of Europe.

That had included the Vatican. The allusions which he had so often dropped, seemingly absent-mindedly, had proved that his operators-agents had been very active in Rome.

For instance, he had often hinted at the possibility of the forthcoming event "of a red Pope." At that time, the mere idea had sounded an absurdity. It must be remembered, that the Vatican then was dominated by the most anti-Communist Pope, who had ever ruled. Also that the USA and the Pope were intrinsically intermingled with their anti-Russian strategies, and anti-

Marxist global front. The thought of a future red Pope, therefore was not only absurd, but an impossibility.

Yet Vladimir seemed to know that such an "impossibility" was bound to come. Although at that time the present author had assumed that when he had said red Pope, Vladimir had meant the Armenian Cardinal Agagianiam.

Whenever that equivocation had occurred, Vladimir had smiled a Mona Lisa smile, without comment.

Years later, when John XXIII became Pope, the author understood. Vladimir had a listening post, active in the silent corridors of the Vatican. With the connivance of those who were preparing the path for the election of a pro-Russian Pontiff.

The present author never knew with certainty. Since by the time that Pope John XXIII had come to the pontifical throne, Vladimir himself had vanished, suddenly and for good into Soviet Russia.

He never came back, since following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, most of the Georgians with whom the Russian dictator had surrounded himself, including Beria, chief of the Soviet secret police, were liquidated.

Chapter Eighteen

Replacement of the Gestapo with USA intelligence. The Russian KGB, the master tactician, versus the CIA's naivety in Vaticanology. The two spying giants prepare for the dramatic contest. The CIA campaigns for the resignation of a pro-Russian Pope.

It is obvious, that the penetration of the Gestapo into the Vatican, prior to the outbreak of World War II, paid off colossal dividends.

The "elimination" of an anti-Nazi Pope, with his replacement by a pro-Nazi, yielded immense benefit to Hitler and his Nazi-occupied Europe.

The lesson, of the importance of having an alert intelligence apparatus within or near to the Vatican, was learnt with a vengeance by the Kremlin, which, after the war, stepped up its efforts to fill the intelligence Vatican-Moscow gap.

But if the KGB had learnt their lesson, the USA had not been totally inactive. True it never gave "Vatican watch" top priority. Nevertheless, since the end of the hostilities, it had become aware of the importance which the Vatican had assumed in global politics.

President Truman had realized that, as soon as he had succeeded Roosevelt, upon learning how Japan had approached the Vatican for its first peace feeler, weeks before even the dropping of the USA's atomic bombs upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Although cautious in his public utterance, Truman had been privately greatly impressed by the disclosure. It was even said, that his setting up the CIA, had been helped by his realization, that the Vatican, could act in a manner which other powers could not, except via old fashioned intelligence apparati, accustomed to traditional inefficiency and outdated spying mannerisms.

Hence his idea of a super-efficient and super-ramified intelligence organization, like that of the Vatican, which, eventually gave birth to the CIA.

The CIA, at first, discounted the importance of the Vatican as an intelligence centre. Since the Vatican's intangibility in the intelligence field they had pontificated, was due to its exclusive integration with the Catholic Church.

No secular power, therefore, could match it, since the Vatican was an intelligence all on its own, specializing in ecclesiastic problems. Political ones were only tangently touched by its operations.

Such an assessment, which had discomforted many who knew better, however, received a mortal blow with the death of Pope Pius XII.

His disappearance as a main protagonist of the Cold War, left an immense void, which could not be filled, in the grand anti-Soviet strategy of the USA. Such realization, brought home to the intelligence establishment, the terrible fact of a political reality.

A great question mark, had appeared suddenly on the horizon, with the void left by a Pope who had been such an active partner of the USA. Who was going to be the next Pope? Would the new Pontiff have carried out the same anti-Communist crusade, which Pius XII had carried out until his death, to support the USA?

Nobody seemed to have known for sure. And nobody seemed to have been able to give any satisfactory answer. This was due to the simple fact that, the CIA and cognate agencies, knew next to nothing about the personal or political bias of those, who were potentially candidates for the oncoming pontificate.

In their sudden eager bewilderment, following Pius XII's death, the young CIA and company had assumed that the KGB had already promoted a new pro-Russian Pope, from the Kremlin. As a result of this false assumption they had set themselves to counteract such Russian moves, via lobbying with an eagerness, which became very offensive to many Cardinals.

The lobbying for a new Pope, who would follow the anti-Russian stance of Pius XII, counterexploded in their faces. Many

Cardinals, who were still uncertain how to vote, were antagonized. In fact, they became easy recruits for the opposite camp.

The new papal candidate, came out from nowhere, or so it seemed. He was sponsored not by any pro-Russian Cardinals, but by the French, who had had enough of Pope Pius XII's anti-Communist crusades. The result of it all was that Pope John XXIII was elected, to the surprise, chagrin and alarm of the USA.

The CIA was not only mortified, she was abased and rebuked. And the lesson was learnt in earnest.

But if the defeat of the CIA had been a veritable disaster, with the election of Pope John XXIII, those which followed, proved to be a catastrophe.

Pope Paul VI, proved to be not only pro-Russian and pro-Marxist, he was secretly a de facto anti-American Pontiff. At least in the ideological meaning of that word. All the efforts of the USA's intelligence, to influence the Conclave which had elected him, had proved totally ineffective.

Thanks to such dismal failure, a new science emerged and flourished in Washington. Vaticanology. In no time, Vaticanology became the paramount study of all the intelligence apparati of America.

The disastrous election of Paul VI, had alerted the USA intelligence community to the fact, that the personal views of a Pope, could truly help to make or to undo, the most basic strategy of the American foreign policy.

This had been proved by the fact that Paul VI had turned out to be even worse in his pro-Russian pro-Marxist policies, than the worst pessimist of the State Department had ever visualized. For the USA, his policy could have been summarized as a "national disaster." It had altered all the American versus Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe relationships. Last but not least, the USA relationship with Latin America.

The efforts which the USA had carried out to make Paul change his stance, came to nothing. His visits to the USA had no political effect whatsoever. The hopelessness of the task, then induced the CIA to resort to psychological warfare against him, identified by a subtle policy of dis-information against his person and his pontificate.

Rumors became current and spread to the effect that Paul was unstable, no logner knew what he was doing, and that he was writing the wrong encyclicals.

Then an unheard of suggestion circulated from nowhere to everywhere. The Pope, it was said, should resign; since he was unfit to be a Pope.

The campaign affected a remarkable proportion of the Catholic Press, in England and in the USA. No one knew from where the suggestion had come. But the fact that it soon spread, became consistent, and accepted in certain quarters proved that it had been a well organized psychological crusade of dis-information. Indeed, a campaign of calumny and of personal slander.

Simultaneously to the resignation campaign, the CIA then mobilized her agents in most Catholic quarters. Bishops and Cardinals in the USA were recruited. Bribes were offered. Promises of parochial and ecclesiastic elevations, prospected.

In Rome, Villa Stritch became a nest of dissimulated intrigues. There Bishop Marcinkus, the American prelate in charge of the Vatican Bank, was courted, flattered and adulated. Cardinal Cody of Chicago, suspected of having embezzled millions from his diocese, became a member of an American anti-Paul Mafia, working for Paul's resignation. Paul, who had been on the brink of sacking Cody, hesitated, and then postponed his removal from Chicago.

Other Cardinals became, if not agents in the worst sense of that word, at least cooperators. They proposed the idea that the Pope should resign as soon as possible; or at least that when the end came, Paul's successor, should be totally different from him.

Rumours went around that Paul's successor had already been put on the files of the CIA; also in those of the National Security Council. The latter, a body specialized in the grand ideological strategy of the USA in Eastern Europe.

Names were mentioned, friendships recollected. Prelates, who had anything to do with Poland, or with Polish minorities, or with Polish interests, or who had top jobs in the White House, like the Chief Adviser to President Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski who was Polish born, a practising Catholic, and still a fervent Polish patriot, for instance, were alerted by the prospect, that a

radical redirection of the Vatican, was going to redress their historical glory and independence.

What had provoked the rumours? Nobody seemed to know. Their sudden emergence had been as mysterious, as the sudden campaign started, seemingly from nowhere for the resignation of Pope Paul VI.

One thing, however, became certain even then. The initial lobbying to be carried out in the forthcoming Conclave, had already begun and in earnest. Indeed, it had been initiated, some years back, when the illness of Pope Paul VI became serious.

Since then, it had been noticed, that for no apparent reason, many American prelates had started to visit Poland, while the Polish primate, Wyszynski, a fanatical supporter of the anti-Russian policies of Pope Pius XII, was courted and wooed, as never before.

Cardinal Cody, for instance, visited Poland and became guest of a junior Cardinal, of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla. Again for no apparent reason. The justification of Cody, had been that he had the largest Polish parish in America, 800,000 Poles of Chicago. Did however, Cardinal Krol have the same excuse? He was a Pole himself. Others gave specious reasons for their sudden interest in Poland. The fact, remained, the strange peregrination of USA prelates, had begun, for no reason whatsoever.

The KGB noticed the phenomenon, the curious fascination of the USA's Catholic prelates and government officials for Poland, and made ready. As it had, after the mysterious campaign against Paul VI had commenced.

Both campaigns had been interconnected, and had been anything but mere coincidence. They had been promoted by the same source. That is, by the combined operations of the special section of the CIA and of the National Security Agency. Both agencies had launched the campaign against Paul VI. Both agencies now had started their campaign in preparation for the election of his successor. That is to say, for the election of a Pope of their own.

Chapter Nineteen

The mechanics of the elections of three Popes. The absence of the Holy Ghost. How "progressive Pope John XXIII" almost lost by one vote. Secret coalition elects left wing Paul VI. The two immovable blocks and the dangerous "compromise" prior to the election of Pope John Paul I.

Once inside the conclave the Cardinals are supposed to invoke the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Meditation and prayer, plus the utmost consideration about the future of the Church, becomes their main activities. The image, is fallacious.

As soon as the doors of the conclave are shut, the Cardinals turn instantly into politicos of the most bribable kind. Their transformation is the worse, because they become tinged by piety and religiousity, two ingredients which helped them to gain their Cardinalate.

Cardinals have been the most bribable ecclesiastical personalities from time immemorial. The most typical, being the Borgias, as already mentioned, with their "sacks of gold to fill the whole of the Sistine Chapel." Which meant, of course, sacks of gold to be given to those Cardinals, who were going to elect a Borgia as the new Pope.

In our times, the sacks of gold, spells ideological orientation and interests of groups of nations, led by the two major superpowers.

In the preceding chapters, we have seen what makes Cardinals vote for one candidate or for another. Their considerations are anything but religious. They are essentially political. They vote, like Congressmen or Senators, or Cabinet Ministers, when selecting or supporting a premier.

It cannot be otherwise. Since the Vatican and the Papacy, are involved essentially with political problems. Hence the neces-

sity of the right Pope, capable of dealing with political situations, necessitating political acumen.

As the election of anti-Communist Pius XII was motivated by the fear of Communism, so the election of his successor, Pope John XXIII, was motivated by the reaction of many Cardinals, against the pro-American right-wing policy of Pius XII.

In the minds of many, pro-Americanism, and Cold War, spelt reaction against the contemporary forces of "progress." That was wrong, they said. The Church had to harmonize herself, with the left-wing tendencies of the period.

Although this thinking prevailed, the victory of those who had advocated it, had not been an easy one, as originally planned. Reactionary Cardinals, managed almost to snatch the victory from the "progressives" at the very last moment. The defeat or victory had depended literally on the mood of one elector. Had the mood of one single Cardinal changed, in fact, instead of a "progressive" Pope, the conclave would have elected a Pope even more reactionary and conservative than Pius XII himself. The new Pope would have been one Cardinal Ottaviani, the head of the Holy Office, a man, who would have been perfectly at home in the fourteenth century.

The mechanics of the conclave which had elected John XXIII, originally had been motivated by a massive conservative determination to block the election of a "progressive" or left-wing Pope.

The Cardinals of that conclave had split into to irremovable blocks: the conservatives who wanted to carry on the pro-US-anti-Russian policy of Pius XII, and the "progressives" who wanted its total abandonment.

The conservatives were headed by arch right-winger Cardinal Ottaviani: the progressives by a group of "moderates." Two of the candidates of the latter were Cardinal Agagianian, born in Russia, and Cardinal Roncalli, the easygoing Patriarch of Venice.

Agagianian was so immensely popular that the Romans had already been calling him Pope Agagianian long before even the conclave had met. He was supported by the Communists of Italy, and even more ominously by the Kremlin (See Chapter 16, *Stalin's Plan for a Red Papacy.)*

His candidature scared the moderates, and strengthened the conservatives. The conclave became locked into an insoluble impasse. At this, a coalition of French Cardinals which had been working secretly for the promotion of "their" candidate, sprang unexpectedly into action by casting the necessary first five votes for Roncalli.

Agagianian at the next ballot lost a dozen votes almost at once. The conservatives, however, voted massively for reactionary Ottaviani, having considered Roncalli "uneligible." Soon a group of moderates joined the solid French block. By the fourth ballot, Roncalli gained again, the parties polarized, were running neck and neck. On the fifth, non-candidate Roncalli had overtaken archreactionary Ottaviani, who lost by one single vote.

The election of Pope John XXIII, in short, had been due to a coalition of French Cardinals who had masterminded a determined anti-Pius XII, anti-American, and left-wing campaign, secretly briefed by anti-US, pro-Soviet Russia, General de Gaulle.

The mechanics had been simplicity itself: a purposefully block of votes as a starter, and the rest of the Cardinals, the majority of them traditionally undecided, will follow.

At the conclave of 1963, the mechanics of the election of Paul VI, had worked on the same pattern. Except, that the influence of the USA had been minimal, while that of the "pro-Russian progressive" had been overwhelming from the beginning.

The conservative, and small band of secret pro-USA, who at first had been allowed to emerge, almost menacingly, the better to gauge their real strength, ultimately were routed by the serried battalions of the "progressive" left-wing approach. The conclave had turned into total defeat for the USA. The symbol of the pontificate of Pope Paul VI.

With the passing of the years, the counterattack was organized and was made to gather momentum against the Pope. It culminated in the CIA's campaign asking for Paul's resignation.

Cardinals in Rome and elsewhere, having formulated a policy of opposition to Paul VI, jointly with high prelates in key positions in Europe and the Americas, had formed a kind of secretive but effective alliance with the most influential intelligence agen-

cies of the US. Amongst these were the Directorate of the CIA, the Central Security Agency, the special strategic wing of the Pentagon and other policy formulators of the American Administration.

The Curia-CIA Coalition had come into existence with the precise objective of neutralizing the pro-Communist policies of Paul VI commonly known as the Vatican-Moscow Alliance.

The US, which had followed the alliance for years, had grown seriously alarmed at its progress, not only because of its accommodating attitude to an expanding world communism but because it had identified the Catholic Church with an offensively orientated Soviet Union determined to acquire the capacity to project its ideological and military presence around the world.

The Curia-CIA Coalition gave themselves a dual task:

a. The discreet sabotage of Paul VI's Vatican-Moscow Alliance while he was still alive, and,
b. The promotion of the election of the next Pope, following his death.

They began with an insidious campaign of denigration against Paul VI, a campaign which, as already indicated, culminated in a persistent demand for his "resignation" as a Pope. The world press, including a good portion of the Catholic press, followed suit. They were "providentially" helped by the "sudden" deterioration of the already frail health of the Pope. The deterioration was so unusual that ugly rumours concerning the "acceleration of his demise" circulated for a while after his death. The rumours were never substantiated.

With the death of Paul VI, and the preparation for the new conclave, the hostile forces in the Vatican took positions ready for a decisive victory.

The conclave of 1978, was to be crowned by a USA triumph. All the labours of an updated energetic CIA, now, at last, seemed to have come to fruition.

The CIA, or rather the special section of the CIA "dedicated to Vatican affairs," was sanguinely optimistic. They had penetrated one of two key citadels. Indeed, they had already secured a

key position, via which to influence the election of the next Pope; or at least, from which to sabotage, any efforts from the opposition to elect the wrong Pope. That is, another pro-Russian progressive Pontiff.

Curia Cardinals, the masters of intrigue, protocol and equivocal tactical practices, were on their side. Some of these had been bought by the CIA years before. Others had been known to be ready to "side" with the pro-USA party, to block the ambitions of "progressive" candidates, who had been promoters of Paul VI's pro-Russian strategy.

The Curia-CIA, Italian anti-Communist triumvirate's main objective, was, in addition to their primary purpose of electing a pro-American Pope, or at least a neutral Pope, a Pope who was pliable and willing to destroy the Vatican-Moscow Alliance. But if the preparation of "their" Pope was paramount, the instrument via which "their" new pontiff could destroy the alliance was even more so.

The alliance necessitated a powerful political substitute with which to fill the void once its links between the Vatican and Moscow had been severed. The Curia-CIA think-tank had already formulated one with such religious-ideological plausibility that it made the whole project politically acceptable and pragmatically viable. The formula was simplicity itself: the rejection of Paul VI's Vatican-Moscow alliance, and its substitution with the sustenance of existing Communist systems outside Soviet Russia.

But with two provisos:

a. that such systems became independent from Moscow, and
b. that they be tacitly activated by a dual Vatican-USA sponsorship with their operations inspired jointly by Rome and Washington.

The formula spelled the Vatican-American acceptance for the potential transformation of a vast portion of the Socialist world into a Catholic-American sponsored Communist condominium. Although, because of its unprecedented nature, it was a dangerous ideological imponderable, assessed from a pragmatic

stance it was a political masterstroke.

Thus, it effectively encouraged the repressed nationalist aspirations of the statellite regimes within the Soviet zone (such as those in Eastern Europe), it facilitated the strategic commitment of the Pentagon, while simultaneously debilitating those of Soviet Russia. Last but not least, it counter-matched the messianic objectives of a menacingly expanding Soviet imperialism.

Following the traditional turmoil of the death of Pope Paul VI, the ponderous machine for the election of his successor was set in motion.

The Cardinal in charge, the French Cardinal Villot, Secretary of State of the last Pope, announced the date of the conclave. Cardinals flocked into Rome. Those, on the spot, set in motion at once their lobbying with those who were arriving from all over the world.

Villa Strich, outside Rome, where the USA Cardinals met with frequency, became busier than ever. Confidential opinions were exchanged, received, given and passed on to the Cardinals, known to have opposed the policies of the dead Pope.

The listening stations of the KGB and of the CIA were set in motion. Everything was made ready for the papal race. Was the long-ranged preparation of the CIA, this time, going to ensure a clear cut victory for the USA?

Chapter Twenty

Preparation for the election of the new Pope. The Holy Ghost is supplanted by the CIA and the KGB. The USA and the Soviet Union's chess game inside the conclave. Mini-plots. The surprising acting role of junior Cardinal Wojtyla. Chance or bribery? The astonishing progress of four ballots. The unknown candidate is told to choose the "right" name: Pope John Paul I. The CIA's total defeat.

The one hundred and eleven Cardinal electors, entered into the Sistine Chapel, in solemn procession, the pre-ordained ceremonies were commenced and carried out like clockwork. Then an imperious voice ordered everybody out, in Latin, *"Extra omnes."* The purpled prelates knelt, and invoked, collectively, the Holy Ghost, by singing the "Veni Creator Spiritus."

The conclave, convened to elect the successor to Pope Paul VI, had begun. The Cardinals, while singing, however, seemed to be concerned more than with their invocation to the divinity, with their inner thoughts, the choice of a man they were about to elect to the throne.

They were thinking on political terms. Since they knew that from their choice, there would have depended the future, not only of the Church, as Church, but also of the Vatican, as a power on a par with the two dominant superpowers of the century.

The Cardinal Carmelengo, in charge of the proceedings, watched the electors with seeming inscrutable authority. His apparent aloofness, however, was only a mask. Because he, more than anybody there, knew what had been going on behind the scenes since the death of Paul VI. The lobbying coalitions proposals, put forward by various groups of Cardinals, supporting this or that party, faction or even conspiracies.

Cardinal Villot, the former French Secretary of State, of the dead Pope, was an enigma. Rumours had it, that, while conducting the foreign policy of Paul VI, he had had contact, with those, lay and eccleaiastic, who were opposed to it. For instance, with the CIA itself. The rumours were never proved.

How his influence, in the conclave could prove important. Sensitive manipulation of the procedure, for instance, could have been planned, before hand, with interested parties. Had that happened, it would have been impossible to prove. Since the seeming impartiality, and almost bureaucratic working of the voting, would have precluded any personal or partisan interference.

In short, since procedural manipulation, to swing the votes in favour of this or of that party, amongst the voting Cardinals, would have been a "seeming" impossibility.

Traditionally there are three methods, via which a Pope can be selected:

a. by "acclamation"—one Cardinal will stand up and announce the name of a Cardinal he would like to be Pope. If the other Cardinals reply assenting, the Cardinal mentioned will become Pope.
b. by "delegation"—the Cardinals, should they agree, would appoint a committee of 15 Cardinals whose task would be to elect the new Pope.
c. election by "scrutiny" or by secret ballot.

The first two procedures were discarded centuries ago. Indeed, they were seldom, if ever, used. The third became the more traditional and was used for almost all papal elections.

The typical working of a conclave was the one which followed the death of Pope Paul VI. There the proceedings commenced with Cardinal Villot, announcing, that the Cardinals, must choose the "scrutineers." These are the three Cardinals, who will check and count the votes. The scrutineers were chosen by lot.

One Cardinal, thereupon, takes the chalice where the names of all the Cardinals, have been deposited and shakes it repeatedly to mix them. When he has finished, he draws out the first paper slip. The first name to come out was that of a junior Cardinal, Karol Wojtyla.

Cardinal Benelli, a close friend of the dead Pope, could not hide a facial grimace of surprise. Several other "progressive" Cardinals seemed to be even more surprised. They recollected that Wojtyla, although a junior Cardinal, and although operating in the wilderness of a small provincial town, had recently had unusual contacts with American Cardinals. Amongst others, Cardinal Cody of Chicago, a well-known CIA key representative, Cardinal Krol, and others.

Benelli, Cardinal Felici and other supporters of Paul VI, looked concerned. Had Villot, whom they had suspected, of having been working for the CIA, given them, a well-planned surprise?

Cardinals, used to the hard facts of political intrigues, are hard-faced individuals. Benelli thought of the reports he had had, from his intelligence networks, about Wojtyla's operations, and the American wooing of him. These, he recollected, had become more frequent, since the beginning of the CIA campaign, asking for the resignation of Paul VI. Could it truly have been a mere chance, that the junior Polish Cardinal, had been chosen by the Holy Spirit, to play such a prominent role, in his first conclave? Could it not have been mastermined by Villot himself, or by some other in a silent plot to elect their man?

The second scrutineer to come out of the ballot was Cardinal Lorscheider. The man is from Brazil, a progressive of a kind, supporter of Paul VI and a reformer. He supports Liberation Theology. He might have voted for the Benelli party. The third scrutineer was a black Cardinal, Gantin, an advocate of reform-revolutions, openly a racist against the white race. Benelli felt reassured, though still under the shock of Wojtyla's having been assigned to play such a key role in the proceedings.

Cardinal Villot then told the scrutineers to go to the altar, after a Cardinal had emptied the remaining pieces of paper into a container. Once that had been done he reminded them about the procedure concerning their voting, as prescribed by Pope Paul VI, himself.

After a dramatic interval, Cardinal Wojtyla wrote down the Cardinal of his choice upon his slip of paper, then he folded it, and pronounced the words of the oath, written by Pope Paul VI, "I call to witness Christ, who will be my judge, that my vote is given

to the one who before God I consider should be elected."

Having said that, he dropped the slip of paper into the chalice. The two other scrutineers, did the same. All the other Cardinals followed. When all had voted, Wojtyla took the chalice to the scrutineers' table. The two other Cardinal scruitneers were beside him. Wojtyla put his hand into the chalice, and picked up a slip of paper. This, he unfolded, looked at the name on it and then wrote it down on a sheet of paper. The two other scruitineers next to him, did likewise.

After a short interval, Wojtyla put his hand into the chalice, and proceeded as he had done the first time. As the names on the slips of paper were read out aloud, the three scrutineers, imitated by all the other Cardinals, wrote down the names announced by Wojtyla. When it was finished, Wojtyla read out the result of the first ballot.

The procedural role played by Wojtyla, was impressive. The junior Cardinal, was obviously a born actor, and had played his part as if somehow he had been well prepared himself for it "in advance." Or, as if, as Benelli afterwards confessed, he had been briefed beforehand, about the part he was going to play, in the outward mechanical proceedings of the ballot itself.

To Benelli, like to others, that had not been an idle suspicion. It had been a serious question mark, which events in the near future, were eventually to explain unsatisfactorily. When Wojtyla read out the results of the first ballot, the result proved to be a resounding defeat for progressive Benelli and his followers. Although not a CIA triumph, the result nevertheless had been tangently a "neutrality" victory for the CIA. The most arch-conservative Cardinal of the whole conclave, Cardinal Siri, had topped the polls. Twenty-five votes.

Siri had been a supporter of anti-Communist Pope Pius XII, he was an ardent advocate of Pius XII's policies, anti-Communist, anti-Russian, pro-American, a denouncer of Vatican Council II, a bitter opponent of Pope John XXIII's and even more of Paul VI's "disastrous pontificate."

The CIA had had him on their lists as a pro-USA candidate for years. Luciani of Venice, a non-committed Cardinal, had 23 votes. Benelli and his friends felt reassured. The balance was a

reasonable one.

Cardinal Benelli was hopeful. The more so since he had been conducting an energetic campaign, on behalf of the Patriarch of Venice for weeks. His lobbying in favour of the non-politiccal Luciani had operated in all quarters, with particular regard to the Cardinals of the third world. These had been told that the USA was against a "progressive" Pope. A "progressive" Pope, Benelli, advised them, would have helped the Third World, whereas a pro-USA one would have done the reverse.

Benelli, a facile and persuasive talker, who had entertained ambitions about succeeding Paul VI himself, had supported Luciani, having realized that the opposition to his own papal candidature, had been blocked, even before the conclave had begun, by the USA. The CIA's opposition inside and outside the Vatican, had been extreme, and "silently" virulent.

His own candidature, having thus been nullified, he decided to sponsor a nonpolitically minded Cardinal, that is, Luciani of Venice. Luciani of Venice, was a pastoral prelate, whose main qualification was his political innocence. Political innocence spelt easy manipultion on the part of a political veteran like Cardinal Benelli, used to the intrigues of high-level grand strategies.

Benelli's sponsorship of Luciani, doubled at once, between the first and the second ballot. Several Third World Cardinals were persuaded to vote for him, as did, several others from Europe. When Cardinal Wojtyla announced the result of the second ballot, Benelli gave a visible sigh of relief. Luciani had had 46 votes.

The interval between the second ballot and the third ballot, was employed to exert a most energetic pressure upon the electors, particularly upon those who had expressed their suspicion about an American "plot." Although there had been no concrete evidence about any such plot, the idea that the CIA had somehow penetrated the conclave, made several noncommitted Cardinals vote for a nonpolitical Pope, that is, for Benelli's protege. When the result of the third ballot was announced, in fact, Luciani got 66 votes.

Cardinal Benelli and others noticed that Villot had become visibly worried, and had shown signs of nervousness. Some of the

electors asked themselves the reasons. Benelli's question mark became paramount. Was he part of some plot? Could it have been, that the ballots, had upset Villot's carefully-layed plans? And therefore, that his prearranged "chancey" choice of junior Cardinal Wojtyla, as the impressive actor of the conclave, had come to nothing?

Benelli noticed also that another no less strange reaction had come from the American Cardinals. Although none of them had got a single vote, their countenance, starting with that of Cody, had been one of optimistic expectation. Their optimism had shone forth at the first ballot, when Cody, Cooke and Krol had given significant smiles, and had nodded to Cardinal Siri. The pro-USA operators had started well, and hoped to do better.

But then Benelli suddenly came face to face with an unexpected problem. Luciani got scared and indicated that he did not wish to become Pope. He did not have the qualifications. Many candidates, traditionally, express the same fears, for effect. It is part of play-acting. With Luciani, however, his protest was genuine.

Between the second and third ballots, the opposition confabulated, almost in the open. Cardinals Koenig and Suenes, plus Wojtyla, came together and were heard assessing Luciani's position. Luciani was only 29 votes short of the total of seventy-five needed.

The Americans also seemed to have joined the race. Cardinals Cody, Krol and Cooke and others, called a little conclave, inside the real conclave. The situation was being assessed on political terms. In other words, the consultations of these little conclaves, in which Wojtyla had been undoubtedly involved, had been high powered politicing.

After the usual interval, finally Cardinal Villot, ordered a fourth ballot. The proceedings of the previous three were repeated. When the votes were counted, Luciani had polled 96 votes.

The Cardinals burst into a spontaneous applause. Luciani seemed dazed. Cardinal Villot seemed also negatively surprised. After a while he approached Luciani and asked him, in Latin, whether he would accept the nomination. "Do you accept your

election as Supreme Pontiff, which has been canonically carried out?"

Luciani remained silent, then gave a surprising answer, "May God forgive you for what you have done in my regard."

The reply was so unexpected, that the Cardinals blinked in astonishment. What did Luciani mean, or what had he implied, by giving such an unusual reply? Villot, was speechless and confused. He looked like a man in despair. Had he made a secret promise, to someone inside or outside the Vatican, which had been totally dashed, with the election of the unknown candidate?

Also had Luciani, hinted at something which he had known had been going on, prior to the conclave itself? Or had he hinted tangently at a reality, which, he Villot, had not expected, having previously assured somebody or some unknown promoters, that nothing of that kind would happen?

Luciani, whatever the truth, now it was too late, gave the correct reply, in Latin, *"Accepto,"*—I accept.

"By what name will you be known?" Cardinal Villot then asked him.

Luciani, again did not seem sure what to say, and stared at the Cardinals, by whom he was surrounded. Then, having looked at Cardinal Benelli, and Cardinal Felici, his two promoters. He smiled, hesitated, looked again at them, as if to draw the confidence needed for the right reply. The two Cardinals nod approvingly.

The search for their approval had not been merely accidental, or even less, the mere gesture of a shy, dazed man. For the fact was, that Benelli and Felici, between the interval of the third and fourth ballots, had already approached Luciani, preparing him for the "inevitable."

They had not only encouraged him to prepare himself for the papacy, they had actually told him what name to take. John Paul I.

The choice, Benelli and Felici explained, would have been a tribute to the memory of Pope John XXIII, who had ordained him a priest, and Paul VI who had made him a Bishop.

Cardinals Benelli and Felici, of course, had something far more important in their minds than that. Namely, the indication

that by choosing such names, the policies of the two left-wing progressive Popes, would have been maintained, during the oncoming pontificate.

By replying, "I will be called John Paul the First," therefore, the new Pope, himself, indicated, no more, no less, than that.

But even if the naive former Patriarch of Venice, had not had the slightest idea of what his two new names meant, his sponsors had. Benelli and company had looked at the new pontificate as a continuation of Paul VI's anti-USA and pro-Russian grand strategy of the past.

The CIA had lost a royal battle of the first magnitude. The future had become very bleak, for the hopes of a novel Vatican-Washington Alliance.

Chapter Twenty-one

The new Pope breaks with traditions. No coronation, no thrones, no majestic "we." The CIA and KGB play a waiting game. Indication of the shape of things to come. Revolution with a smile. Pope Luciani encounters those who stole his bank. He decides to deal with them.

When the newly elected Pope appeared on the balcony and faced the crowd in St. Peter's Square, before even giving the traditional blessing, Urbis et Orbis, to the city and to the world, he smiled. The smile won the instant approbation of both and became the hallmark of his pontificate.

Seldom has a popularity spread so quickly around the globe. The spontaneity of the acceptance of the new Pope, was unprecedented. He became, at once, a superstar. The sad image of Paul VI, was forgotten, and in its place, the smile of Pope John Paul I, shone like a rising sun.

The omen was welcomed by the crowd in St. Peter's Square, by the bewildered Catholics, who until then had been saddened by the burden of Paul VI, no less than by diplomatic corps, in Rome, who had been as surprised as the rest, with the result of the conclave. Their expectation of a very conservative or of a very "progressive" Pope, had all been wrong.

None, could as yet guess what Pope Luciani was going to do. He was an unknown quantity, and hence anything could happen. When, however, the first whispers had it, that he had been the primary choice of Cardinal Benelli and Cardinal Felici, many frowned with concern.

Cardinal Cody of Chicago, the bumblebee of the CIA's operations, hid his disappointment, with the patronizing air, of a disappointed ecclesiastic gangster, who had suffered an expected "setback." "A nice little Italian fellow," he called the new Pope. "Will the Venetian Peter ram his gondola without drowning in

the Vatican laguna," then he commented sardonically to some of his colleagues in Villa Strich.

The CIA, although stunned, considered that their defeat at least had been tempered, by the fact, that if they had not had one of their candidates elected, the KGB had certainly not won any victory either. Anyway, the fight was far from being over. Their curriculum vitae on Luciani, proved him to be a "pastoral" man. He knew nothing about politics. And more important still, he was certainly not a "progressive" in the subversive meaning of that word. Pastorality was better than a hostile pontiff.

The CIA was master in "manipulation," the creation of manufactured "opportunities" and of "accidental events" in the local and world media being one of its primary functions. Disinformation and the magnification of diminution of personalities, being the other. Their campaign against Paul VI, had certainly proved the latter.

Their counterpart, the KGB, however, was no less "expectant." Their intelligence had kept them at the current, concerning the Benelli-Felici sponsorship. If Luciani, knew nothing about political intrigues, they reasoned, his leaning towards nonconformism, informality and simplicity, spelt a malleable individual. "Progressivism in pastoral matters, might have led to "progressivism" in political ones.

The two giant hostile intelligence directorates, set up an eager "Pope Watch" and waited. The immense popularity of the new Pope, told them, that whichever side Luciani was going to lean, he would have an equally immense impact, not only upon ecclesiastical, but equally upon diplomatic and hence, political problems. That was for sure. Pope watching, for the two of them, became paramount, since every gesture or word of the new Pope would have indicated the nature of the new administration.

Pope Luciani, never spoke of or even mentioned East-West conflict, giant battles or the superpowers or the impending Armageddon. Instead he mentioned a character which neither the CIA nor the KGB computers had ever coded in their mechanical brains. A puppet called Pinocchio.

Unlike Russian Premier Brezhnev, or USA's President Carter or French, British, Arab or South American potentates,

Pinocchio was a wooden puppet, who talked sense and spoke with his master's voice, in that case, that of Pope Luciani himself. Master and puppet sounded, immensely innocuous, immensely innocent and immensely full of wise naivete.

Only few detected a real potential danger, precisely because of it. The inner circle of the CIA, woke up to the danger, then Pope Luciani, started a staggering revolution, with a smile.

He addressed the crowds and the world, no longer, by using the distant and majestic "we," as done by all the previous Popes, including Paul VI. He started to use the word "I." The change from "we" to "I," although seemingly small, produced a deep impact on his listeners. The Vatican was shocked and frowned in open disapproval.

But more was to come. The new Pope had refused to be carried upon the sedia gestatoria, or the portable throne which had borne the Pope above the crowds in the past centuries.

Pope John Paul I, instead, walked in procession, like everyone else, and on foot. Many pilgrims were chagrined, because they could not see him.

Then rumours had it, that Pope Luciani, wanted to change even the Coronation Mass. The Coronation Mass has been almost unchanged, since Pope Boniface, had put the crown on his own head, making a famous declaration, which had given no end of troubles to future Kings and rulers: "The Church has one body and one head, Christ and Christ's vicars; Peter and Peter's successors," he had declared. "In the Church there are two swords, a spiritual and a temporal sword; both kinds of power are in the hands of the Roman Pontiff."

Pope John Paul went knowingly not only against the historical and ecclesiastic significance of such a declaration, he went also against another no less famous traditionally accepted formula connected with his future coronation. The formula, used for almost one thousand years, is even more explicit than that of Boniface about the spiritual and political papal pretentions: "Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns, and you know that you are father of princes and kings, victor of the whole world under the earth, the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and honour without end."

The terminology had pleased Pope Pius XII, who was crowned with the crown in truly medieval splendour. He had done so intending to give a tangent political significance to his Pontificate, identified with his tacit alliance, first with the Axis Powers, and then with the USA against atheistic Communism.(1)

Then, as if that had not been sufficient to shock the Vatican's establishment, Pope Luciani made it clear that he did not wish to be crowned at all. Also that he did not want "ostentatious" ceremonials, in the near or distant future.

Instead of the crown and other imperial paraphenalia, Pope John Paul now wanted to wear the mitre, as the emblem of pastoral office. That innovation, together with the discarding of the plural majestatis "we," and other minor traditional ceremonies, which were silently avoided, made the Vatican establishment shiver with silent horror. Were all these innovations, the beginning of a similar revolution in, perhaps, curial and diplomatic matters? Was Pinocchio, after all, not that naive innocent puppet which the new Pope had made his listeners believe he was?

This question, which many had asked themselves during the first week of the new Pontificate, was an important one. Not only for the CIA and the KGB, but also for observers nearer home; beginning with certain interested individuals within and outside the Vatican.

Some of these, had become embroiled in mysterious manipulations and financial transactions, in which they had involved the Vatican itself. Misdeeds of the most serious character, had come to the surface during Paul VI's administration.

They included Catholic bankers, Catholic speculators and their manipultion of vast funds, which had included the Vatican Bank. The implication of Cardinals, in Rome and outside Rome, not excluding some resident in the USA, was also suspected. Amongst these, Bishop Marcinkus, of the Vatican Bank.

Cardinal Benelli had seen to it, that the Pope, should become familiar with the files dealing, with Bishop Marcinkus. Also with those of previous "God's Bankers," called Sindona, and with that of his best pupil, Roberto Calvi.

Calvi, the head of the Catholic Banco Ambrosiano, had been

dealing with Marcinkus for years. Cardinal Benelli had not needed to tell Pope Luciani about the two partners. Before becoming Pope, Luciani had had to deal with both, in a bitter financial tug-of-war, during which they had robbed the Patriarch of Venice, of a whole bank. This had been the Banca Cattolica del Veneto, a darling creature of the Venetian Patriarch. In secular parlance, they had cheated or rather had robbed the patriarch of Venice of the entire financial structure upon which his region had been built.

The coup, besides having deprived the Venetian clergy of their pension funds, had also grossly humiliated Patriarch Luciani, who had protested to Pope Paul VI about the whole sordid affair, in no mean terms.

Now, Luciani, as the new Pope, had the power to see into the files of both Marcinkus and Calvi et al. The files had been enriched by the private investigation of Cardinal Benelli, himself. The additional Benelli disclosures, shocked Pope Luciani to the core.

The intricate financial operations of the Vatican Bank with former Vatican adviser, Sindona, were even more shocking. Sindona, after the financial empire collapse, in 1974, in the USA, was then trying to involve the Vatican in an international scandal, of the first magnitude.

He had the power, or rather the knowledge, to bring into the open, not only dubious secret dealings of the Vatican Bank, but also to involve former President Nixon, in a formidable scandal, during his presidency. A Vatican inspired financial scandal, which would have implicated several Cardinals, not to mention Bishop Marcinkus, himself. Sindona, eventually was jailed for 25 years in a USA prison. Later he was also extradited to Italy for another trial, in September 1984, where he was sentenced to another 14 years in prison, in March 1985.

Pope Luciani, then learned even more. Pope Paul VI had been advised by Sindona to transfer the Vatican money abroad. This money, Sindona then manipulated, to his own advantage. Also how Paul VI and Sindona, had discussed the sale of the Vatican's controlling interest in the 350 million dollar Societa Generale Immobiliare. This had been Italy's biggest construction concern, a concern which had controlled, besides immense proper-

ty abroad, also notorious Watergate complex in Washington.

Pope Luciani learned all this and even more. After a cursory examination of the main facts, he finally decided that a man, like Bishop Marcinkus, who had been associating himself, with such shadow figures as Sindona and his pupil Roberta Calvi, should no longer be in command of the greatest undisclosed money amassment in the world. This included, not only the millions deposited in the Vatican Bank itself, but also the gold reserves which the Vatican had deposited in Fort Knox, in the USA. The Vatican fortune, there, it was rumoured, and the rumours were well founded, amounted to at least three BILLION dollars.(2))

Pope John Paul I became worried, very worried. The stealing of his Venetian Bank, back in Venice, had taught him, that the people who were now manipulating the Vatican Bank, were capable of anything at all.

His fears were no fantasies; they were realities, enough to give a nightmare to any Pope, who wished to avoid a repetition on a colossal scale, of the intrigues, which the crooks, now inside the Vatican itself had carried out, and which had ended with their robbing him of his bank, while in Venice.

The crooks in the Vatican, from what he had seen, were ready to strike again. And Pope John Paul decided there and then, that it was his duty to do something about it. And quick.

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(1) For more details, see the author's *Vatican Imperialism in the 20th Century.*
(2) For more details, see the author's *The Vatican Billions.*

Chapter Twenty-Two

The 900 million dollar securities swindle. The two Cardinals and President Nixon. The new Pope's secret advisors. The CIA is alarmed. Ecclesiastic and poltical reorienttation. The Jesuits and the dilemma of Liberation Theology.

Sometime during 1973, the US Justice Department, compiled a report, marked "very secret." It was about a colourful plot, inspired and operated by the Mafia. It revolved around the central idea of European businessmen borrowing large sums of currencies, against counterfeit bonds and stocks, of American corporations.

The ramifications had led the US Justice Department's special agents inside the Vatican itself. And surprise, surprise, into the very office of Bishop Marcinkus, Director of the Vatican Bank.

The agents had inverviewed, "very privately" Marcinkus. Did Marcinkus know anything about the counterfeit stocks? If so, what did he know? And if he knew anything, what were his connections with the operators? Also, had they approached him with the view to transfer most of the 900 million dollars profit derived from the counterfeit securities swindle "via" the Vatican Bank, or with the "connivance" of the Vatican Bank? Was the Bank partially involved in the plot? If so, how, when and why? Did the Pope know anything about the whole affair? Or did any of the Pope's financial advisors have anything to do with the swindle?

The questions were pertinent and to the point. Besides being highly incriminating, they became potential time-bombs liable to explode at any moment, inside the Vatican, the whole thing triggered from Washington.

The US Justice Department investigators, received ubiquitous replies, none of which, had been sufficient to incriminate the Vatican Bank. But also which had been insufficient to dispense it

of any involvement in the whole affair. The report, once in Washington, was considered of such an explosive character, that, it was decided it should be kept "secret."

When some individuals, who had seen it, protested that it should be disclosed, opposition from unexpected quarters came down upon its advocates like a ton of bricks. Secret pressure from the USA hierarchy, was added upon the Justice Department. Additional secret ecclesiastic and political interests were arrayed against the publication of the report.

Finally, when the secret controversy, was at its bitterest, a veto closed the issue altogether. President Nixon himself, had intervened, "forbidding" the publication of the secret Justice Department's probe into the Vatican Bank.

The President's party had everything to lose, upon the bursting out of a scandal, in which the USA hierarchy and the Vatican had all been involved. The direct, and indirect support of the President in the matter, could have affected the forthcoming presidential elections. Positive proof that Nixon himself had vetoed the publication of the report, under his party's pressure, and for the fear of Catholic and Vatican ire, has never come to the fore. This, although very accurate reports on the whole affair have been and, are still, kept in the financial files of the CIA, and of the US Justice Department itself.

The whole Mafia-Vatican-USA Justice Department connection had been hushed up also because it had transpired during these same investigations, that a former Dean of Cardinals, none other than Cardinal Tisserant, whom we have already encountered, had been "tricked" into the plot.

Cardinal Tisserant's diaries, which were secreted in the vault of a Swiss Bank, as already mentioned, told the whole story in detail; in additon to his description of the curious death of "his" Pope, Pius XI, prior to the outbreak of World War II.

The story of the securities swindle, and the subsequent investigation of other scandals, involving former papal advisor Sindona, plus the Vatican-Ambrosiano's financial intrigues, which had been responsible for the "stolen" Venetian Banca Cattolica, shocked the new Pope.

Pope Luciani, who, after the first week, had confessed he had

not yet grasped the whole tangle of the Curia, became even more stupefied at what the secret files deposited in his study, had revealed.

The more so, since the contents of the files had been corroborated with further evidence by his two main advisors who, now, saw the Pope ever more frequently, mostly in private. Namely by his original sponsors: Cardinal Benelli and Cardinal Felici. The two had added to the horrors of the discoveries by having known personally the chief villains. Also, for having been involved as investigators into the secretive network of the Vatican's corruption.

The latter had been maximized by corruption from the USA. Cardinal Cody, who had patronizingly called Luciani, "a nice little Italian Pope," now came under the scrutiny of John Paul I, on the advice of Benelli, an inveterate enemy of the Chicago prelate.

Back in Chicago, the USA Internal Revenue Service, had been looking into the financial idiosyncrasies of Cody's diocese. A veritable potential ecclesiastic Watergate. But even more damaging to the image of the Church, was the private life of Cody. Rumours of lassitude and scandal had surrounded the bullying Cody, whom, it was openly rumoured was supporting a woman, to whom it was again rumoured, he had donated a million dollars.

Pope John Paul, had come to dislike him, not only because of his reputation, but also because Cardinal Benelli suspected, with reason, that Cody was a spy for the CIA. The Cody-Benelli mutual suspicion, had been cemented by factual evidence, in Rome and the USA. Since, if Cody had the network of the CIA at his disposal, Benelli had that of the Vatican, plus the subsidiary mini KGB, within Catholic intelligence. The residue of the machinery working during the Pontificate of Paul VI.

The disclosures and continuous prompting of the two Cardinals Benelli and Felici, made the new naive Venetian Pope ever more uneasy. John Paul I felt he was enmeshed in a network of dangerous intrigues. The financial ones, within the political, and both with the Curial ones. Rumours had made the latter even more perilous, because of the forthcoming proposed changes in the machinery of the Curia. Because of it, many feared the sack. Beginning with those who had worked for the USA intelligence,

having guessed that their operations have been noticed. Cardinal Villot became visibly morose. He knew that Benelli knew. Villot feared Benelli, and now that Benelli had become the chief secret counsellor of the new Pope, he feared Benelli's influence on the latter.

Villot's fear was justified. For that is precisely what Benelli counselled the Pope. The demotion of Villot, the suspension of Cody, the investigation of Marcinkus and his friend Calvi and of the Ambrosiano Bank. Secret demands from the Bank of Italy and banks from London and the USA had asked the Vatican to "clarify" the Vatican Bank's close connections with both, plus with the Vaticans "shell banks" in the Bahamas and elsewhere.

Benelli's prompting and John Paul I's prolonged musing upon the secret files, finally made the startled new Pope, spring into action. He ordered a quick "aid-memoir" on Cody. Then he put a black Cardinal at the head of a very important organization, which dealt with the Third World, where progressive prelates are dominant. Black Cardinal Gantin, became the head of Cor Unum, dedicated to international aid; mostly to left-inspired causes.

Villot, until then Cor Unum's chief, was told of his dismissal, without notice. Somebody, from Rome, made a brief phone call to Chicago, via which Cody learnt that the new Pope had ordered a fresh investigation into his case.

The elevation of a black left wing Cardinal noted for his antagonism to the USA, and his political "progressivism" alarmed the CIA, which saw in the promotion, the direction in which the new Pontificate was going.

Cardinal Benelli was beginning to run the Vatican, via his own sponsored Pope, after all. Just as the CIA had feared before the conclave. The Curia was about to have a radical shape-up, inspired by the anti-American Cardinal. The hand of the latter, had already been seen operating in various other areas. The ecclesiastic one.

The elevation of the black progressive Cardinal had become the pointer of forthcoming similar changes. There were already rumours about Cardinals from Latin America having been considered for upgrading. Most of them were supporters of Libera-

tion Theology. And hence anti-USA.

A Curia inspired by them, would have become fatal, for a Vatican-USA relationship. The Central America cauldron, would be made to boil with forthcoming ideological revolutions, and finally with armed antagonism against America. The new papacy had started to move in a very dangerous direction.

The more so, since, the Jesuits, behind the whole movement of Liberation Theology, were supporting ever more openly, Communist guerrillas. Some of these movements, indeed, were even led by Jesuit padres. More than one of them fell fighting.

This in the very backyard of the USA itself. The Jesuits had helped Marxists seize power and were encouraging others to do the same in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and elsewhere. It was they, it was rumoured, who had opposed the Vietnam War, who had a hand with the urging of the impeachment of President Nixon, who had proposed the campaign against Cardinal Cody, and who were fostering a rapproachement with Soviet Russia. If given a free rein, soon they would have become the dominant inspirers of the new Vatican.

The latter consideration, to the USA, was of paramount import. Since Father Arrupe, their General, who had been in contact with Moscow, had become a ruling Pope himself, with a private army of his own, conducting an ideological war almost independently of the Vatican proper.

Soon after the conclave, the new Pope had a talk with the 20 Cardinals from Latin America and was deeply impressed by the fact that most of them supported Liberation Theology. During the previous five years, he was told, revolutionary, or rather Jesuitical Catholic cells, had multiplied and were still multiplying very rapidly. Cardinal Arns of Sao Paulo, Brazil, informed John Paul how there were more than one hundred thousand basic Catholic revolutionary communities operating in South America.

These communities, equivalent of revolutionary cells, were called "communidades eclesiales de base," and operated "in the gospel spirit" with ideas taken directly from Marxism.

Pope John Paul I was shocked. Although he had heard of Liberation Theology as a kind of theological abstraction, he had never imagined its reality to have assumed such vast menacing

dimensions.

The CIA, who knew of Luciani's naivete about the problem, feared that Cardinal Benelli, now his counsellor, might encourage him to support it. After all, wasn't Liberation Theology born during the pontificate of Paul VI, and thus, had it not been sponsored by Benelli himself?

Up to then, between 700 and 800 priests and nuns had perished, fighting alongside the guerrillas. The number was growing as the guerrillas were multiplying all over Latin America.

Pope John Paul became perturbed about the whole problem. It was obvious that he had to do something very drastic about it all. Like neutralizing Father Arrupe and his Jesuitical battalions, for instance. In Rome as well as in South America. The new Pope, decided to start dealing with Father Arrupe. Perhaps with Father Arrupe's dismissal.

But then, before that, Pope John Paul, had to deal with a no less urgent task; the plots, intrigues and corruption which had been so rife inside the Vatican itself. The Vatican Bank, its lay and ecclesiastic associated, plus its shady financial operators. And last, but not least, with the Curia itself. Many heads would soon be made to roll. The quicker the better.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Suspicions before the new conclave. Secret moves and intrigues. The Pope makes ready to unmask corruption. Fear in the Curia. The visit from Soviet Russia. The Archbishop of Leningrad's special papal audience. He drops dead at the Pope's feet. The fatal cup of coffee. First move of the CIA or of the KGB?

After Pope Paul VI died, it was arranged that the 111 Cardinals, would not go into conclave until 25th August. Their voting would not begin until the following day, 26th. Cardinal Villot was in charge of the whole proceedings, and when asked to give a plausible explanation for the long delay, his evasiveness turned into unusual brusqueness.

The delay of twenty-five days had been not only very unusual, but was one day short of the permissible limitation, allowed by the rules written about it, by Paul VI himself. It had been the longest in modern history. Many considered the three-week long period, a result of curial inefficiency. A small group, however, thought it a well-planned "interval" to permit the rival forces to align themselves in preparatory plotting schemes, for the election of the "right" Pope.

The right Pope, of course, meant the "wrong" Pope for those who believed in a "progressive" Pontiff. And vice versa. That was due not only to ideological hostility, but also, to more immediate Curial selfinterests.

To the latter, the right Pope, meant a Pope who, like Paul VI, was not going to investigate the rumours, then current in Rome and elsewhere, of malpractices connected mostly with the Vatican Bank.

The election of a Pope, who might have wanted such an

investigation would have meant exposure and dismissals; in short, disaster.

To them, Pope John Paul, spelt just that. The more so,since the main enemy of the principal accomplices, implicated in the intrigues of the Vatican Bank, now, had become the new Pope's principal advisors.

The man, was Cardinal Benelli who, although banned from Rome, since 1977, following the successful intrigues of Bishop Marcinkus to have him removed from the Vatican, had conducted a campaign, lasting years, to have Marcinkus removed from the Vatican Bank. Benelli, instead had been removed himself from the Secretariat of State, and relegated to the backwater of Florence, by Paul VI, who had followed the advice of Marcinkus.

The two men had remained mortal enemies ever since. Benelli considered the conclave's long delay a move by Villot to prepare the ground for Villot's master plan; the election of a pro-USA Pope. A pro-USA, or at least a neutral Pope would have suited him and his friends, since the cover up of the Vatican Bank, and all its financial misdeeds, would have continued unabated.

The election of the Venetian Pope had upset all his plans. Since the Vatican Bank had almost literally stolen the bank which Luciani, then Patriarch of Venice, had cherished, on behalf of his Venetian clergy it was almost certain, that Luciani, now the Pope, would square matters with those who had cheated him. The theft had been carried out by Bishop Marcinkus, and by his associate Calvi, then President of the Catholic Ambrosiano Bank, of Milan. Patriarch Luciani had gone to Rome, to protest personally to Paul VI, from whom he got no satisfactory explanation. The reason had been simple. The Pope had been "persuaded" by Marcinkus and Calvi to "approve" the trick. The sale, or rather the theft, of the Banka Cattolica to the Vatican Bank had been kept a secret for more than a year. Marcinkus and Calvi had seen to it that neither Luciani nor Pope Paul, should be notified of the "theft."

The Vatican Bank's "secret coup" got 46 million dollars at the 1971 value—120 million at the 1985 value.

Now that the same "tricked" Luciani, had become Pope, the time for counter-action had come. Calvi, Sindona and Marcinkus

feared the worst. Exposure, dismissal, potential arrests.

But if Providence had elected Luciani Pope, could not the same Providence also help to rectify the whole affair? That is, somehow unmake him? The process was a difficult one. Difficult to formulate in human terns. Nature might have helped. Were there not many rumours, to the effect that the Pope was very frail. Also that his medical record was an interesting one? Well then?

The question mark was not an idle one. Many who feared most from the new Pope, expected and hoped for some kind of a "miracle." Cody of Chicago, although never expressing any such expectation, was certainly one. The more so, since he had been informed by Cardinal Biaggio, that the Pope had told him how he had already given orders for Cody's sacking from his diocese.

Another was Cardinal Villot, who had expected his replacement, the moment Luciani had been elected. The new papacy, in short, for the two Cardinals, had spelt the oncoming certain departure from their traditional seats of power.

But if several individuals had feared the papacy of John Paul, for personal reasons, the CIA had feared him for ideological ones, whose dramaticity was immense. This was so, because the new Pope, had expressed an interest, under Benelli's guidance, to renew the Vatican's links with Moscow. The renewal, would have commenced, via a bridge, with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The bridge was already there. Prior to his death, Pope Paul VI, had initiated a dialogue with various Russian Orthodox Prelates. Chief amongst these was Metropolitan Nikodim, Archbishop of Leningrad and Novograd.

Archbishop Nikodim was held in respect by the Soviet Politburo, which had considered him as a reliable link, with not only the Orthodox Church inside the Soviet Union, but also, with external ecclesiastic authorities abroad. Paramount amongst those—the Vatican.

Cardinal Villot had wanted to cancel his visit to Rome. Cardinal Benelli, however, with the approval of the new Pope, willed otherwise. The acerbity of their individual and ideological rivalry, had visibly sharpened since the announcement of Nikodim's visit, and many noticed it.

Villot's demeanour and inner nervousness was gauged by the amount of cigarettes he smoked. His daily ration was about 60. He was a chain smoker. Since the new Pope, and above all, since Benelli's ever more frequent sessions with John Paul, the 60 had become 80 and even more. One of the cleaners reported that one night he counted 102 cigarette butts in Villot's study.

Thanks to Benelli's determination, the Metropolitan's appointment was kept.

Benelli had briefed John Paul, that the meeting between him and the Leningrad Metropolitan was an important one. Nikodim, he had pointed out, was a reliable bridge-maker between the Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. His importance with the Soviets, who regarded him as their unofficial representative, under the disguise of his ecclesiastic status, was paramount. The Pope therefore, had to consider the Metropolitan's visit as paramount too. The time allotted, exceptional, a full fifteen minutes.

Benelli, furthermore, had briefed John Paul about certain additional highly sensitive implications of a diplomatic nature, connected with the Orthodox Archbishop. The Archbishop, Benelli reminded him, besides being the Ambassador of the Orthodox Church, was also the unofficial envoy of the Politburo itself. Their exchange, therefore, had better be secret. No one should be present, to avoid "indiscretions."

When finally the day arrived, and the Archbishop was ushered into the Pope's presence, the contrast between the two men, could not have been more striking.

The Russian looked moved and behaved almost like the proverbial Russian bear. The image had not been the creation of a westerner's mind, struck by the physical appearance of the Metropolitan of Leningrad. It had been made first by the Russians themselves.

Archbishop Nikodim, in fact, was an individual larger than life, in Leningrad and wherever he went. In Rome he appeared and looked even larger than in Russia.

He was of imposing stature, close to six feet, enhanced by the voluminous ecclesiastic regalia typical of the Russian Orthodox Church. He walked with determined robustness, rendered the more striking by his face, covered by an extensive flowing beard.

The beard, not carefully tended, began immediately below his eyes, and lengthened down to his stomach. His hands were hairy. He gave the immediate impression of the physical strength and aggressiveness of a wild buffalo.

The impression was not an exaggerated one. Since Metropolitan Nikodim, while waiting for the day of the audience, used to strip for vigorous swims in the swimming pool of his Roman hotel. When swimming, his vigour was noticed by the onlookers, attracted by the unusual hairiness of his chest and body.

Nikodim, born in a small town not far from Moscow, had the physical and mental stamina of an energetic peasant, fired, by religious and ideological ambitions. Hence his swift climbing on the ladder of the Russian Orthodox Hierarchy. And hence, now the very delicate assignment from the Kremlin itself, to the Pope of Rome.

The fact, that originally the Kremlin had meant the mission for the pro-Russian Paul VI, now had made the Kremlin's message to the new Pope, even more important. Their encounter, therefore, had to be even more confidential, than originally planned.

Hence, the necessity for the two, Pope and Metropolitan, to have no witnesses during their conversation. Not even the usual, private secretaries, prefects, interpreters and similar persons, traditionally expected to attend such regular papal audiences.

The papal prefect lead the Russian Metropolitan into the Popes study, and formally introduced Nikodim to the Pope. While this was being done, the Pope's personal friend, Sister Vincenza, a nun whom he had brought to the Vatican from Venice to look after him, came in carrying a tray bearing a coffee set. The prefect, following previous instructions, indicated to the nun to leave. The two withdrew, leaving the Pope alone, with Metropolitan Nikodim.

After a formal greeting, the Pope exchanged a few words with the Metropolitan, then, while still talking, approached the coffee set, and poured two cups of coffee. He then offered the first cup to the Metropolitan, and asked him if he wanted sugar and cream. Nikodim accepted both, brought the cup to his lips and took a sip of coffee. Pope John Paul was about to do the same.

Facing his visitor, he brought the cup to his mouth and was about to drink when he stopped, stupefied.

The Metropolitan's face seemed to have been suddenly struck by an invisible blow; his eyes became glassy, like those of a dummy. Thereupon, having dropped the cup and saucer, which were shattered on the top of the Papal desk, he clutched his chest with both hands, emitting a choking grunt, then crashed on the floor, toppling backwards, with a thud.

After a few moments of stupefaction and horror, the Pope telephoned for help. While so doing, he noticed a particularly gruesome sight. Although the Metropolitan was seemingly dead, his eyes and his mouth remained open. His lips were drawn back in a grimace, while his eyes were bulging from their sockets. Two gruesome details, to be remembered during another similar event, we shall encounter presently.

Almost immediately the Pope's two secretaries, who were outside, rushed into the room. The Pope's doctor, was summoned. The doctor arrived, examined the Metropolitan, shook his head. The Russian was dead.

One of John Paul's secretaries suggested that he should cancel all his subsequent appointments. The Pope replied with unusual sharpness, that he would not cancel anything. He had been obviously shaken, and perhaps did not wish to dwell upon unwarranted suspicions, of foul play. Since, any suspicion to him, would have been unacceptable and, indeed, impossible.

It might be asked, how, it had been feasible to describe the above, owing to the fact, that there had not been any eyewittness to the whole horrific scene. The details, were recounted by the best eyewitness of all: by the Pope himself.

John Paul, in fact, later on, graphically described the sequel of events as above. It must not be forgotten that Pope Luciani, had been an expert journalist, and that, therefore, he knew how to reconstruct an episode. The more so, since, in this one, he had been personally involved with the possibility that the poisoned coffee, might have been meant for him.

Assuming that he had drunk the first cup?

God had willed otherwise. Thanks be to God.

Chapter Twenty-four

Heart attacks, natural and "induced." Roman reaction to the sudden death of the Russian Archbishop. John Paul's naivete. Why not serious investigations? The first move against the new Pope? Intriguers high and low.

The cadaver of the Metropolitan was still warm, when the news of his death, spread fast all over Rome. In the corridors of the Vatican it was said, that the Russian prelate had sipped the poisoned cup of coffee which had been meant for John Paul.

Although the details had not yet been known, the Roman populace had drawn their own conclusions at once. The coincidence had been too coincidental to have been a mere coincidence. A reasoning shared by many, in certain high quarters.

What was behind it all? The doctor, had declared it to have been a massive coronary. The Pope had accepted the medical verdict without batting an eyelid. So had most in his entourage. The press, did the same. Imitated by the world media, both treated "the coincidence" of a massive coronary, with the utmost casualness. Within a few days the episode was forgotten.

Forgotten by the world at large, except by the Roman populace. The latter, having developed a sensitive feeling about certain papal happenings because of their intimacy with it, remained persuaded that the Russian prelate had sipped the poisoned coffee, which had been meant for the new Pope.

It had been the first visible manifestation of intrigues, which had been brewing up in the dark corridors of the Curia, and elsewhere, since John Paul's election. The fact, that it occurred within eight to ten days of his election, makes the event even more sinister.

The acceptance by the Pope of the sudden death of the Russian Archbishop, as a natural death, appeared also somewhat

curious. A medico's verdict, somehow had sounded somewhat unconvincing. Had it been a natural demise, which it might have been, a second, or third medical opinion, might have helped to reassure all, of the veracity of a natural massive coronary.

Massive coronaries, can occur naturally, but they can also be induced artifically. The administration of lethally contaminated beverages, food, or indeed even of tactile deadly drugs, is a routine operation for many intelligence agencies.

The intelligence apparati of the two hostile superpowers, are supreme professionals in such fields. Their mastery of the art of a seemingly "natural demise," via a naturally produced "massive coronary" having reached perfection, unimagined only a few years ago. A providential demise of some troublesome diplomat, hostile politico or ambitious general, was conveniently caused by "massive coronaries." These seemingly natural-induced heart failures, appeared to have been medically accurately diagnosed. That was due to the fact, that the professionals of the super-intelligence apparati, had reached such a sophisticated excellence, as to fool, any average scrutiny, on the part of doctors, or even medical specialists.

The Romans, in their simplicity, asked themselves also subsequent impertinent questions. Was the coffee drunk by the Russian prelate forensically examined? If so, by whom? When? How? Where? What was the result? If doubts had been expressed, even wrongly, why was not the coffee, or anything connected with the tray, examined by an impartial team of experts? Not only experts on toxicology, but above all, experts in the super-sophisitcated apparel used by certain intelligence operations?

To the Romans, the incredible acceptance of the Russian's death, by the Pope, and by his entourage, somehow seemed strange. Either the Pope was even simpler than his smile indicated, or, some people near, him had carried out a coup against him, which only chance, had caused to misfire.

Then, was the coffee which had spilled upon the thick carpet, when the cup fell from the Metropolitan's hand, collected, examined and kept for further scrutiny?

Had the nun and the personnel in the papal kitchens been questioned properly? No one suspected the nun, or the Venetian

staff who John Paul had transferred from Venice. But could not their Venetian naivete have been exploited by intelligence operators? The innocence of the Venetian team, beginning with the Pope himself, had been noticed, at once, within a few days of their arrival.

It had also been known, for instance, that the Pope used to walk alone, mostly early in the morning or at night, exploring rooms, corridors, or even corners of the Vatican gardens, to the surprise of those who saw him. Also that to enter into the papal kitchen, was the easiest little adventure in the world. Such general lack of surveillance, had been tempting to those planning a coup. The operation against John Paul, which had so miscarried, because of a cup of coffee, perhaps had induced them into a hasty and premature move.

These, of course, were mere speculations. No proof was produced. Certain explanations were even given, asserting the "genuineness" of the coronary. Forgetting that the "genuineness" of certain providential coronaries, could have been provoked by the supreme skill of the agencies which might have induced them.

"Providential" demises via coronaries, were repeated, with consummate skill, in the not too distant future, as we shall see presently.

The Romans, furthermore, knew that the intrigues prior to, during and after the conclave, had been carried out with increasing intensity at different levels, and in many quarters.

The conclave's decisions and the choice of a papal candidate, are not made inside the conclave. They are made in the smart restaurants of Rome, where Cardinals, meet for their dinners or lunches. Waiters, chefs, waitresses, although seemingly uninterested, have proved to be extremely efficient reporters, informers and assessors of the conversations, moods and talk of the purpled customers.

The rivulets of information and speculation then flow through various channels, while some of these are dissipated deep in the underground of Roman gossips, others, are absorbed into the higher echelons of Roman, Curian and foreign intelligence.

The amalgamation of these three very often can give an accurate picture of a pre-conclave climate. It can certainly indicate the nature of the reality of a new pontificate.

The Romans were familiar with the secret intrigues inside the Curia itself. They knew about the financial mafia connected with the Vatican Bank, and the Bank's lay associates. Also how the former pupil of papal counsellor Sindona, Roberto Calvi, now had become a partner of Bishop Marcinkus, the Vatican Bank's director.

They had guessed also of the latter's fears, of potential disclosures. Of the apprehension of many Cardinals, and other Curialists, of losing their posts. These were immediate, urgent and dangerous problems, which the new Pope had to face and to solve.

The Mafia, and its mafiosi, operating inside and outside the Vatican, could be very dangerous. If, desperate about their immediate future, they would not hesitate to strike. The Mafia could not care whether the danger came from a bank, from a political group or from the Pope himself. The sense of danger, if immediate, could make them strike.

In addition to that, however, the Roman populace guessed that something, even more dangerous, was afoot. They sensed, that the new Pope, somehow had not been welcomed "in certain quarters." They felt, that great ideological issues were at stake. Why was not a Pope, a left-wing Pope, elected after Paul VI? Or why, not a Pope who was a conservative? The USA had detested Paul VI, because of his pro-Communist stance. They had always wanted to change his policies, to make the Vatican pro-American, against the Russians.

The election of a Pope who knew nothing whatsoever about international problems, somehow, although welcomed, had puzzled them. Had it been the choice of the Holy Ghost? No. It had been the choice of politicians inside and outside the conclave. John Paul had been obviously a "compromise" Pope. Hence, he was not pleasing those who had opposed or even, who had supported his election, and thus, hence a potentially dangerous future for his pontificate.

This kind of reasoning had not only been peculiar, to the

popolani of the Roman Trastever, the traditional low working-class plebe of the Roman ghetto. It had been the reasoning heard also in the highest quarters.

Certain Cardinals, were mentioned, their names indicated only in whispers. Several were accused of all kinds of intrigues, often without any positive foundation. But rumours in Rome, have always had a touch of positiveness, and the old saying that there is no smoke without fire, very often proved accurate.

Gossips on the golf course of Acqua Santa, where Marcinkus went so frequently, or even more, the conversations of the Cardinals, who dined at the posh Roman restaurant next to the Pantheon, indicated in which direction the wind blew.

Plots in the making had certainly been afoot. They had been carried out following Luciani's election. Both could have become dangerous. That is, people inside the Vatican, who had feared for their immediate future, might have become willing to act as operators, against the new Pope.

In short, the intelligence of the two superpowers, might have been tempted to employ their discontents, at various levels, to carry out a coup against John Paul.

The "wrong" cup of coffee, to the Romans, had been one such coup. Cardinal Benelli and some of his supporters had thought exactly the same.

Chapter Twenty-five

The Cardinals who accused the KGB. Those who suspected the CIA. The Vatican Mafia's incompetence to carry out the coup. A fourth suspect: the Jesuits. Did John Paul know? Why did the plotter want him dead? The spur to a new attempt.

If Cardinal Benelli, now the confidential advisor of the new Pope, whom the Curia nicknamed the Gauleiter, suspected foul play, and said nothing about it, other Cardinals were less reticent.

One less prudent purpled French speaking prelate, who had already played an active role in the last conclave, and who was to play a very prominent one in the next, asserted that the Leningrad Archbishop had been killed by the KGB.

Another, the same man who had suggested that the conclave should elect four Popes instead of one, accused the KGB for no other reason than, in his opinion, only the KGB could carry out such a terrible act.

According to him, and naturally, according to most American Cardinals, the CIA, could not possibly commit such a deed. There was no reason for the USA to intervene. Anyway, the USA would not operate at such a "low level."

Whether that was their genuine opinion or not is difficult to guess, since most of them, who, by the way, were notorious enemies of Benelli, might have been the victims of their own political "naivete." Even so, whether a few of them had suspected a CIA misdeed, or not, is difficult to assess. If some of them did, they kept it to themselves. The justification for such an operation would anyway, have seemed improbable, at that stage. Since the arcana of high policies are privy to only a few individuals, conversant with the top-secret strategies of the highest intelligence echelons.

The other alternative, the most plausible and popular, was that the Vatican's Mafia, might have had a hand in the affair. The

prospect of the loss of jobs in the Curia, and, the even more-fearsome prospect of oncoming disclosures which could have provoked a terrible financial scandal, about clerical and lay operators, was a serious acceptable motivation for the attempted "killing" of John Paul.

Another source of potential attempts had been minimized. The Jesuits. It must be remembered that the new Pope, intended to dismiss their General, Father Arrupe. Also to stop their distruptive Liberation Theology activities, round the world. The radical curtailment of their operations, was on the Pope's agenda, and had been discussed by John Paul with Benelli "in depth." The Pope, in fact, had decided to dismiss Arrupe altogether.

The various potential operators of the attempt, however, had to be considered innocent until proved guilty. So that, although suspected, all of them, the KGB, the CIA, the Vatican Mafia and the Jesuits, could not have been accused of the first attempt on the new Pope's life until solid proof had been put forward.

Notwithstanding this, however, the fact was, that the Archbishop of Leningrad had died a sudden, unexpected and mysterious death. The medical explanation had been a formula, which, had left nothing to the imagination or open to any serious suspicion. He had died a natural death.

The Roman populace, and few others in the recondita of intrigues, however, suspected foul play. Not few, remained convinced that it had been an attempt to end the life of the Pope.

The Pope himself might have thought the same. His unusual reaction, after the death of the Russian Archbishop and John Paul's "business as usual," even before the body had been taken away, proves that Pope Luciani might truly have suspected something, and therefore had wished to avoid indulging in that "something." His reprimand to the Cardinals who had elected him, immediately after his election, had indicated that perhaps, he had been privy to some intrigues before and during the conclave.

On the other hand, it is also possible that being inexperienced in high political matters, he, might have dismissed, any potential inner suspicions, as totally unfounded. The latter

hypothesis, is the most probable. He had been, and still was, a "pastoral" pastor, even if the disclosures of Benelli, had shocked him to the core.

The easiness of John Paul's routine, work and behaviour, confirmed his informality. His avoidance of protocol and security strictures, became the despair of those who were in charge of Vatican security. The staff and intimates he had brought with him from Venice, were even worse than him, if that was possible.

They themselves had visitors, who they invited into the Vatican's private apartments, or were invited for a gossip, or to the kitchens. Sometimes, Sister Vincenza, who had looked after Luciani for years, would introduce them to the Pope himself, between official papal receptions. In short, the court of the Venetian Pope, worked with the same casualness, which the very informal Patriarch had worked in the easygoing Patriarchate of Venice.

The background of John Paul's court, in short, was ideal for an easy, casual, intelligence operation. Had the Pope drunk the right cup of coffee, instead of the Leningrad Metropolitan, what would have been the result?

The Pope would have died. Hence the necessity for another conclave. Hence the election of another Pope. Hence the advancement of a new secretive planning for the promotion of a Pope, of the extreme left, or, the extreme right. Or rather, of a Pope, supported by the KGB, or by the CIA. Or in additional intelligence terms, even by the Jesuits, provided the latter, had anything to do with the attempt. The Vatican Mafia, could have also been guilty. But while, probably so, and in the position to carry out the coup with the cup of coffee, they could not have acted so quickly, and so coordinately. They were too diverse, divided and too uncoordinated, to even think about the attempt.

The attempt had had all the characteristics of a well thought out operation. The work of a highly efficient apparatus, which had prepared the whole affair, with the utmost diligence, and observance of intimate details, the whole thing made easier, because of the incredible background, and lack of surveillance of the Vatican security, since John Paul had been elected.

The coup, had it been successful, would have yielded a tremendous dividend for the operators of the "right." The Pope's

immense popularity would have been snuffed out, before it became too established. In political terms, before it had done irreparable damage to the USA. Left-wing counsellors, like Benelli and others, would have been rendered innocuous. A new Pope, would have been elected, almost at once. In conclave terms, everything, was ready, because, plans had been set in motion, immediately after John Paul I had been elected Pope.

Since the KGB had everything to lose, with the death of John Paul, counselled by Benelli, the pro-Russian Cardinals, it is logical to conclude, that the potential operator of the Nikodim coup, must have been, the opposite of the KGB, that, the CIA or, some agency, acting on her behalf.

It must be remembered, that the CIA or subsidiary agencies, had been operating in Rome, and, in fact, inside the Vatican itself, since the reign of left-wing Paul VI. It had been rumoured, that, perhaps, it might have even had a hand in shortening Paul VI's life via prearranged neglect. Professor Barnard, the pioneer of heart transplants, commented that Paul could have had his life prolonged. What he meant by that, was never made very clear, in medical terms, and therefore, should not be taken seriously. But the mere fact, that it was made public, by a prominent medical pioneer, indicated, that following the determined demand for Paul VI to resign, a campaign instigated from the USA, his death had aroused serious suspicions.

In addition to the unprecedented lack of security, surrounding John Paul, and the constant watch of various politically-minded "surveillances," it must never be forgotten, that the potential enemies were at his elbows. Or at least, were acting, on behalf of seemingly distant operators, constantly detecting the Pope's movements, habits, decisions and potential plans.

Some of these individuals, as we shall have occasion to see, could hardly have been detected, because of their closeness, to the Pope. They could be found at the very lowest and the very highest levels. Although undetected, and never accused of any misconduct, their subsequent behaviour fermented the gravest suspicions of complicity, with a super-sophisticated intelligence apparatus, which, had everything to gain, from the disappearance of Pope John Paul I.

Chapter Twenty-six

The Pope's housekeepers. Their influence with three modern Pontiffs. The nun as a rival to a Cardinal. The power of a Secretary of State, when a Pope dies. His potential manipulations of the intelligence apparatus. The ultra-secret meeting. The Cardinals must write in their own handwriting. No witnesses permitted. Mystery of their deliberations.

The Pope is a lonely person. Although every second is timetabled, and hundreds of visitors are ushered before him each day, his confidants are extremely few.

Sister Vincenza a Venetian nun, whom Pope John Paul had brought with him from Venice, was the number one personal papal confidant. Others, although on personal terms, were kept at a distance, and could certainly not emulate the trust and familiarity which Sister Vincenza had with John Paul.

It was said that John Paul used to discuss his speeches with her before anybody else had seen or had heard them. Indeed, that he accepted amendments and additions, as suggested by Sister Vincenza herself. Curialists, were shocked, and not amused. The lightheartedness of many of the Pope's asides, in fact, had been attributed directly to her.

Sister Vincenza, furthermore was a kind of supernurse. She had looked after Luciani for years, and knew every one of his curative whims. He regarded her as a kind of supplementary "help" to the official medical guardianship of the doctors.

In short, besides being a friend and a companion, she was also a true confidant, without rival, amongst the personal or official "intimates," of John Paul I.

Most Popes have always had their "female" housekeepers, who, in the course of time, turned into private counsellors, not only about personal trivialities, but also, in matters of moral and in-

deed of political nature. The secretive exercise of their influence, was believed to have been exceptional in many cases.

One of the most notorious of these, in recent times, had been the German nun, Sister Pasqualina, the housekeeper of the fanatical and ascetic Pius XII. Sister Pasqualina began to look after Pius XII, at the age of 22, at a time when the Pope had been a Papal diplomat in Germany. This, in spite of the fact, that the Church forbade priests to have young females in the household.

Sister Pasqualina, remained with Msgr. Pacelli from before the rise of the Nazis until the Pope died in 1958. A record. Rumours had it, that during Pius XII's sporadic bouts of nervous breakdowns, she practically ruled the Vatican.

The rumours seemed to have had some truth although, no doubt, grossly exaggerated. Yet the reality appeared to have been that Sister Pasqualina's influence upon Pius XII had been, real and overwhelming. So much so that Cardinals used to frown whenever her name was mentioned in the Vatican Curialistic circles.

That this was no mere frivolous innuendo was proved by the fact, that one of the most prosaic of Cardinals, took it with the utmost seriousness, Roncalli, the Patriarch of Venice.

One of the first orders that Roncalli issued, as soon as he became Pope John XXIII was to dismiss Sister Pasqualina, within twenty-four hours, of becoming Pontiff. She was asked to leave at once, which she did.

His successor, Paul VI, had a nun called Giacomina. Giacomina was a clever, discreet woman, whose main concern, during Paul's last years was his health. And this to such an extent, that, at times, he permitted her to intervene with official audiences, by reminding him, and his visitors, that the Pope needed "to rest" or should take his medicines.

Sister Vincenza, combined the dual roles of Sister Pasqualina and Sister Giacomina. Her status within and outside the Vatican, thanks to her approachability with the Pope, was unique. Vincenza, however, had one rival, as far as approachability with the Pope was concerned. Her rival was not on personal but official grounds.

This other person, a man, who could see the Pope, as often as

Vincenza, was his Secretary of State, Cardinal Villot.

Cardinal Villot, had been Secretary of State to Paul VI. He had retained the office, since the election of the Venetian Pope. Because of that, he had the right to see the Pope, at least "officially," twice a day. A privilege accorded to no one else.

The Cardinal, who had acted as Carmelengo, that is, who had ruled the Church in lieu of the dead Pope, could and did assume, powers, beyond that of any other Cardinal.

The Carmelengo, during the interegnum, from the death of one Pope, to the election of a new one, acted as a Pope himself. In short, the Carmelengo, became privy to all the "secrets" of the previous pontificate. These secrets included the intelligence information of the two great superpowers—of the USA and of Russia.

Thanks to this, the Carmelengo would have been in the position to influence future events via the controlled manipulation of spying and counterspying.

Cardinal Villot thus was in the position to manipulate at one stroke, the intelligence service, dealing with the most delicate high-policy formulation of the Vatican, in connection with both Soviet Russia and the USA.

Since the USA had been profoundly committed to the election of a pro-American new Pope, therefore, the intelligence formulation of any potential future moves, during the Carmelengo's interegnum, would have been fundamental, indeed decisive.

Villot had been in that uinque situation, from Paul VI's death, till the conclave which elected Pope Luciani. That is, for exactly 21 long days. During such period, he could have manipulated the whole policy-schemes of a "neutral Vatican" for the preparatory election of the new Pope, with the assistance of either the CIA or the KGB.

Cardinal Benelli, and Cardinal Felici, the two friends and supporters of Paul VI's policies, being aware of the danger, had hurried to become the intimate most influencial advisors of Pope Luciani. They had long sessions with him, from the beginning. Some official, some semi-official, and many very private. Indeed, even some very secret.

During the meetings of this "secret papal cabinet," deliberations of the utmost importance were discussed, and even adopted. These concerned, not only the removal or promotion of prelates, within and outside Rome, but also deliberations, dealing with the intelligence manipulations of the two rival main superpowers.

Pope Luciani, might have been an innocent abroad, when it came to spying and counter-spying, nevertheless, it is certain that the sudden death of the Russian prelate at his feet, had made a very deep impression upon him. Cardinal Benelli, who was a veteran in such matters, had pointed out, that the death might not have been a natural one.

It might have been an attempt, originally directed against the removal of somebody else. In short, the operation had gone wrong, either because of the intervention of the intelligence of a rival superpower, or because of a mere mistake.

Whatever the real cause, Cardinal Benelli, had suspected the Nikodim demise to have been the work of the CIA.

Since such suspicion had been discussed by the inner cabinet, Cardinal Villot, who was one of the four Cardinals present, had the amplest knowledge of what the Pope thought, had decided or was planning. He had been a "persona" operating on behalf of one or the other of the two rival superintelligence machines, thus he could have been in the position to pass his information to the one or to the other, to neutralize any decision favouring or opposing either the USA or Soviet Russia.

The presence of the Secretary of State, during these secretive meetings, was "mandatory." That meant, that as Secretary of State, he had to participate in any papal deliberations, no matter how private and "secretive."

Such meetings, had been taking place ever more frequently within days. Many of them, were even never announced and remained 'unofficial."

The problems revealed to Pope Luciani startled, and then scared him.

These were not only those concered with financial matters, or the intrigues of the Curia, or even the intrigues of the conclave, which had elected him. They dealt with ambitions of the superpowers, to use the Vatican as a potential partner, for their

strategic objectives.

Benelli, the master-counsellor, had painted such a picture of international intrigues and deadly plots, that Pope Luciani considered them of such immense importance for the direction of his pontificate, that finally he told the three Cardinals, they must discuss the matter and deliberate upon it, in the utmost secret.

The discussion, was of such a compromising nature, that the Pope ordered the Cardinals, to write their opinions and then have them put into a sealed envelope.

The Cardinals, furthermore, were expressly forbidden, to have them typed, or even to permit their secretaries to read one single word of it. To make sure, that the Pope's orders were literally carried out, the Cardinals had to write their opinions, and advice in their own handwriting. Further to that they had to secure, that no one could nor would open the envelopes into which their writing had been put, by sealing the envelopes each with his personal seal.

During the meeting, the Pope opened each letter, one by one, and read their contents with, at first, visible astonishment, and then, with anxiety and even fear. The four Cardinals had watched with mounting apprehension. The only one who had watched with apparent impassibility had been the Secretary of State. The problems under papal scrutiny had dealt with the position of the Church in the field of a global ideological combat. In short, with the operational designs, carried out, and to be carried out by the USA and Soviet Russia and their plans to use the Vatican as an instrument of world politics, in a future world conflict.

The picture had become so breathtaking that the scandalous intrigue of the Vatican Bank, its financial problems and the Curia's corruption, had suddenly almost become insignificant.

The ex-Patriarch of Venice, who had wanted to be a Pastoral Pope, dealing exclusively with religious matters, now had come face to face, no longer with the antics of the puppet Pinocchio, but with the reality of a monstrous plotting, in which he, as the new Pope, had been cast in the role of a pawn, on the chessboard of a global conflict.

It had taken the four Cardinals, almost two whole weeks to collect the documents for their dramatic briefs.

The meeting had been classified as "ultrasecret" by the Pope himself. No one knew that it had ever taken place, with the exception of Cardinal Benelli, Cardinal Felici and Cardinal Baggio. The two secretaries of the Pope, who knew about it were never told of the contents of the Cardinals letters. Villot, Secretary of State, of course, did. Not so much because of his official status, but because, as a Cardinal, Secretary of State, he had submitted a hand written brief himself.

Following the "ultrasecret" meeting, then Pope John Paul summoned the four counsellors to the privacy of his own study. The meeting took place, with no witnesses of any kind, during the morning of 28th September 1978.

Chapter Twenty-seven

The nun's grisly discovery. The horrific death of the Pope. The "suspicious" readiness of the Cardinal. His strange behaviour. He declares the Pope "officially" dead. A natural or an "induced" heart attack? Amazing distortions of the truth. Unbelievable "promptitude" of the embalmers. John Paul's nun is made to vanish from the Vatican forever. The mystery of two disappearances.

Pope John Paul had another of his very busy days; receiving audiences, attending to paperwork, perusing documents, plus the usual multifaceted protocollian minutiae, which a Pope must carry out without excessive reluctance, annoyance, or visible unwillingness.

Furthermore, he had presided over his "ultrasecret" meeting, without anybody having noticed that it had taken place. With the exception, of course, of the participants. Officially the event had been recorded simply with a laconic "meeting."

At the end of the day, John Paul made ready to have a meal with Cardinals Felici, Baggio and Msgr. Casaroli, the latter the Pope's expert on Vatican-Russian relations, and a former adviser to the deceased Pope Paul VI. John Paul's two secretaries were also invited.

Before dinner John Paul had looked into the kitchen, greeting Sister Vincenza, who was supervising the food, cracking a joke with her. In spite of the heavy day, he seemed cheerful, or, pretended to be. Perhaps he wished to forget the "disclosures" of the "ultrasecret" meeting.

During dinner the three prelates discussed various topics. Between others, East-West relations. Also the difficulties, about the Vatican's approach to establish diplomatic relations with the USA. The "thorn" of the Jesuits was also scrutinized. Concerning

the latter, John Paul, had said that, the following morning he was going to read personally to Father Arrupe, their General, a document which he had written himself. Although he did not reveal its nature, his companions guessed, it had something to do with Liberation Theology.

In addition to it all, John Paul had further revealed, that he was about to examine documents, dealing with the case of Cardinal Cody of Chicago. Cody's file was a thick one and needed urgent attention. (1)

After a pleasant dinner, John Paul bade goodnight to his guests, who left. Once they had gone, he retired to his study, from 9:30 p.m. till about 10:00 p.m. Minutes after 10:00 he emerged, carrying bundles of papers and went up to Sister Vincenza to give her a cheerful thanks for the dinner, exchanging a few jocular words with her in the Venetian dialect, with his usual cheerful manner.

Thereupon, having gone straight to his bedroom, he waved good night, once more, to Sister Vincenza, and closed the door. The time was between 10:15 and 10:20 p.m.

Sister Vincenza, made a mental note that John Paul had gone to bed slightly earlier than usual, made the sign of the cross, and recited a short prayer. Yes, the Pope had gone to bed, slightly earlier than the previous evening. Why? But then she smiled, remembering the bundles of documents which he had taken in his bedroom. That's why he had retired sooner. He was going to read them till late in the night. (2)

The following morning, at about 4:30 a.m., Sister Vincenza approached the Pope's bedroom, to deposit a tray containing coffee upon a small table, then returned to the kitchen. Half an hour later, she went to collect the tray. She was surprised to see that the coffee had been left untouched. Remembering the unusual bundles of documents, which John Paul had taken with him, she nodded knowingly. His Holiness had overslept after all. In the past she had warned him, indeed, she had even scolded him, about reading till late at night.

Still, that had been the first time that John Paul had overslept. It was bound to happen. Back in Venice the pressure had never been so heavy as here. It was better to wake him up, all

the same. Otherwise his whole morning routine would have been upset. She was sure that the Pope would have thanked her with a grin, like a schoolboy who had been caught on the spot, at last.

Following such reasoning, Sister Vincenza approached the door, and knocked gently, once and then twice, listening. Since there was no reply, it became obvious that John Paul was still soundly asleep. Sister Vincenza hesitated. Should she let him rest a little longer, or should she wake him up?

It was already after 5:00 a.m. The first time in her whole experience that John Paul had slept that late.

Vincenza gave another gentle knock. But since there had been no answer this time she decided to call him softly, which she did: "Holy Father, Holy Father. It is late." Again, however, the Pope did not reply. Vincenza this time was puzzled. Then she had an idea. She would turn the handle of the door, and thus make a noise. That would have drawn the Pope's attention; even if he had been still fast asleep. Following the idea with action, Sister Vincenza did just that. But to her utter surprise, again with no results.

Vincenza, by now had become very worried. Then she made a daring decision. Before carrying it out, however, she hesitated. Was she about to commit a sin?

Even if she had, however, then in such an exceptional case, it would have been worth it. The Pope could not be too late. His routine, as well as the routines of many other people, would have suffered.

Sister Vincenza decided that her duty was to wake up John Paul. She would have committed a sin, if she had not looked after him, as she had always done in the past.

While knocking at the door, she had noticed that a light came from the keyhole. Obviously the Pope was either sleeping with the light on, or was shaving. That's why he had not heard her. To make sure, Sister Vincenza knelt before the keyhole, and looked through it. The light in the bedroom gave, her some kind of reassurance. Now she became sure that the Pope was there shaving. Having reached such a conclusion she knocked with determination, at the door, calling him, "Holy Father, Holy Father." This time John Paul, was bound to give a reply. "Are you all

right? It is late."

Sister Vincenza waited a little, but since there was again no reply, or even a sound, she became apprehensive. Sister Vincenza pushed the door just a little. The door receded slightly, to permit her to peer inside the room.

The Pope was sitting in bed, leaning against the pillows, glaring at her, without moving. His glasses had slid half down his nose, as if he had just stopped reading. He was holding a folder in one of his hands.

"Holy Father, aren't you feeling well?" asked Sister Vincenza, following the first moment of surprise. But then Sister Vincenza, having looked more closely at him, was struck with horror at the horrific sight.

The Pope's lips, were pulled backwards and upwards, his gums exposed, giving him a most horrific grimace. But then, what horrified her even more, was, that both his eyes, seemed about to be shooting out of their sockets.

The fingers of his right hand were half clenched, like the fingers of one who had tried to squeeze something which he had wanted to hold. This, although it was dangling like a dead arm, along the bedside. Nearby, lots of papers had been scattered in utter confusion all around. The folder he was holding appeared empty.

For a moment Sister Vincenza, thought of instant help, and pushed the door open. "Holy Father," she asked again, "are you all right?" The Pope, however, did not answer, or move. He continued to stare at her in total silence, and in total stillness, glaring.

Vincenza, retreated suddenly, backwards, then turned, running along the corridor, knocked wildly against the door of the Pope's secretary, nearby, Msgr. Magge, who, at first thought she had gone crazy, unable to understand what she was saying. Then having finally understood, rushed towards the Pope's bedroom, entered into it, and was struck first with unbelief, and then with horror.

Following the first moments of immobility, and stupefaction, finally he recovered, decided to make the first practical move, informed Cardinal Villot. Msgr. Magge, thereupon, having picked

up the Pope's telephone, told the Cardinal where he was, and what had happened.

The Cardinal uttered an exclamation of surprise in French, "Mon Dieu, c'est vrai tous ca? I am coming at once." Then he asked an extraordinary question. He asked Msgr. Magge, point blank, whether he, Magge, had told anybody that the Pope was dead? Magge replied, "No. Nobody knows that the Pope is dead, with the exception of the Vatican nun."

Villot's reply was immediate, decisive and precise. Sister Vincenza must not be permitted to enter into the Pope's bedroom, ever again. Furthermore, he added, "Nobody – I repeat, nobody, must talk to her and she must not talk to anybody."

Villot then, who seemed to have recovered from the first shock of the news, ordered Magge not to leave the Pope's bedroom, but to stay there with the door locked, until his arrival. Then, he asked him to telephone the Pope's doctor, and the Pope's other secretary.

A few minutes, later Cardinal Villot arrived. Magge was surprised at his appearance. Unlike him, who had had no time to even comb his hair, Villot was shaved, well groomed, as ever, and even more striking, icily clam.

Upon entering into the room, he looked unemotionally at the dead Pope, then having approached him, he extracted various items from a bag, he had carried, holy water, an ampoule of oil, and made ready to administer the rites of the dead, with slow, deliberate movements.

While reciting the appropriate prayers, somebody knocked at the door. It was the doctor, who, having entered, and having examined the Pope, gave a medical verdict. In his judgement, John Paul had died between 10:30 and 11:00 o'clock the previous evening of "a coronary occlusion." Then, as if to reassure the two men, he added that "the Pope felt nothing."

The comment of the doctor had sounded so absurd, that, both Villot and Magge looked at him, with unbelief. The contorted face of the Pope told just the reverse. They stared at both the doctor and at the horrific grimace on John Paul's face, expecting some other remark.

Cardinal Villot, after a while, became his usual matter of fact

self, approached the dead Pope, and, without more ado, he removed the Pope's reading spectacles, which he deposited on the side table.

After doing that, Villot, produced a tiny hammer from his bag, and, whispering some latin words, tapped the Pope's forehead with it. He did this, several times, in a gentle, ritual manner.

While so doing, then, he asked in a very impersonal tone of voice, addressing the dead Pope, whether he, John Paul, is veritably and truly dead?

Having asked him the question, then Villot paused, waiting for a reply. Since there had been none, then Villot, tapped the Pope's forehead once more, repeating the question again.

Then he tapped him with the little hammer, yet a third time, asking the same question.

After having waited for an answer, he finally, announced with the utmost detachment, that, yes, the Pope was truly dead.

Thereupon, following another long pause, he turned to the dead Pope's secretary and ordered him to bring in, the dead Pope's nun.

Villot looked at Vincenza coolly, from head to foot, and then asked her to describe how she had discovered the Pope. Precisely at what time? Whom did she contact first? Did she talk about it to anyone else, apart from Father Magge?

"No she did not." Her assurance seemed to satisfy the Cardinal. Villot indicated to Magge, to take her out of the bedroom. Then he told him to bring "the nun" to the care of the dead Pope's Venetian secretary, until further orders.

As soon as she left, Villot took over. Now he was in command; as the Carmelengo. No one was above him. He ruled supreme, and his word was law.

Villot acted at once, with startling determination. He was cool, precise, and appeared to know what he wanted.

His first most immediate and startling order was that Sister Vincenza must never be mentioned; to anybody, at any time. No one was permitted to disclose that she was the first person to find the Pope dead. Even less, her description, of how the Pope looked: Villot repeats the order with the most uncompromising tone of voice. "The nun's participation in the discovery of the dead

Pope must stay a 'secret.' In fact, not a word, should be even whispered about her involvement. Indeed, even that she 'exists.'"

To make sure, that he had been understood, he ordered that Sister Vincenza, as well as all the other household nuns, who had looked after John Paul, should be taken back to their mother house of their Order, at once. No one had to speak to them, and they had not to contact anyone. They were absolutely forbidden to speak to the media.

Having settled the nuns' problem, then Villot reiterates to the dead Pope's secretary, not only that the discovery of "the nun" must never be disclosed, but also that it was Msgr. Magge who had "first discovered" that John Paul was dead.

Upon noticing the utter astonishment of the secretary, then Villot told him, in the most matter of fact voice, "what" the "official version" was going to be.

"The secretary had discovered that Pope John Paul was dead, after having waited for a long time, to accompany John Paul to his early morning mass. The secretary had entered, into the Pope's bedroom, to find the cause of the Pope's delay. Once in there, he had seen that the Pope was dead, in the posture of reading."

Not content with such brazen falsification, then Villot, invented another no less amazing travesty. He ordered the stupefied secretary, to tell the world, that the Pope, had died, while reading a devotional book, called *The Imitation of Christ.*

After having made sure that Magge had well understood, Villot then, turned his attention to the silent doctor, and ordered him, in no uncertain manner, to rearrange the composure of the body. The stiffness, caused by the "rigormortis" which had occurred hours before, must be made to disappear, he was told.

The doctor who in the meanwhile had tried to do some manipulations, to soften the corpse's rigidity, explained that he had been unable to do so, and, that he could not do it, without help.

The doctor's reply, made Villot visibly irritated. Then, resuming his usual icy calm, he ordered, matter of factly, that a firm of Roman embalmers, should be contacted immediately. The task should be done as soon as possible, then he explained.

By now it was 6 a.m. One hour, only after the discovery of the death of John Paul and after Villot had declared the Pope canonically dead, whilst the doctor, had declared him medically deceased.

The call to the embalmers, at that moment, also the excuse given for their presence, in the circumstances, seemed justified, even if, a hurried one. What became a puzzle, when seen retrospectively, however, was the discrepancy of the timing, between the call to the embalmers, and their arrival in the dead Pope's bedroom.

Given the fact, that the embalmers, had been familiar, with the whereabouts of Vatican City, and indeed, of the Papal apartments, since they had already done a similar task, with two previous Popes, with Pope John XXIII and with Pope Paul VI, their so prompt an appearance, had seemed, not so much as a speedy but, almost an impossible one.

Excluding paranormal phenomena of communications, or of divination, and accepting those of a prosaic character, the exceptional speed of the embalmers, could be explained, with one no less prosaic possibility. An alert received by them, prior to the Villot call.

The alert must have reached them, before the doctor's arrival. That is, during the brief interval of time, which had passed, between the discovery of Sister Vincenza, and the briefing to the Pope's secretary, by Villot. Or sometime, immediately afterwards.

Before then, it must be remembered, nobody had known of the Pope's death. The exceptions were Sister Vincenza, Cardinal Villot and the Pope's secretary. And since it was most unlikely that Sister Vincenza, or that the Pope's secretary had "alerted" the embalmers, on their own initiative, it is probable, logical and plausible, that a third person, who knew about the tragedy, namely Villot, might have done it himself.

Unless, of course, there had been somebody coinvolved in a potential conspiracy, who had deemed it necessary to expedite the coming of the embalmers, to prevent the discovery of the artificially induced or of the "accelerated" demise of John Paul, via the prompt injection of the embalming fluids.

In that case, the injections would have been the necessary corollary in the concatenation of a developing plot, meant to prevent, or at least to neutralize an impartial autopsy.

The mystery was never satisfactorily solved. What became a concrete fact, however, was that the embalmers, arrived almost at once, indeed almost immediately after Villot had given the order at 6:10 a.m. A promptitude, so incredible as to be almost unacceptable by any ordinary standard. Unless, of course, they had been cognizant of what was about to happen beforehand.(3)

The morticians after a glance, explained to Villot, that they must "rope" the body. Villot assented with a nod, without showing any emotion whatsoever. Then, by way of a second thought, he indicated that they must also manipulate the distorted jaw of the dead pope. They must put it in a normal positon, he explained, to correct the horrendous grimace on his face.

The embalmers operated with cold expertise, and finished their grisly task, by reshaping the mouth, lowering the upper lip, and finally by closing the eyes of John Paul.

After an icy glance, to make sure that all his orders had been carried out to the letter, Villot then directed his attention to the absent Sister Vincenza.

The sister, who had been "incommunicado" since the discovery of the Pope's death, thereupon, was taken away from the Vatican, with all the other nuns who had worked in the kitchen, and vanished from Vatican City, in silence and for good.(4)

The speed and efficiency of her abduction, indeed of her disappearance, only three hours, after Vincenza had discovered the dead John Paul, would defy any credence, had it not actually occurred, as matter of fact, unadulterated reality.

While this quasi-fictional operation was taking place, the Vatican switchboard communicated, that reporters, wanted to speak to Msgr. Magge. Magge asked Villot what he should say.

As a reply Villot stunned the Secretary with a thunderbolt. "Leave the Vatican, at once, without anybody seeing you," he commanded. "Stay outside Rome, until further notice."

And that's how, within minutes, the two most trusted confidants of John Paul, were made to vanish into nothingness, as if they had truly never existed.

(1) The topics, discussed by the Pope and his guests, were subsequently disclosed by the participatns themselves and confirmed by the two secretaries.
(2) These details, were described by the nun herself, and were published by the Civilta Christiana. See *Pontiff*, by G. Thomas and Morgan Witts.
(3) An author who made a special investigation of the case, believed they had been told of the job, half an hour beforehand, at 5:30 a.m. See *In God's Name*, by D. Yallop.
(4) They were taken secretly to a convent outside Rome.

Chapter Twenty-eight

> Rumours, suspicions, accusations. The suspected "potential" killers of John Paul. The Cardinals vote for an autopsy. The autopsy is avoided in spite of the majority of the Sacred College. The triumph of Cardinal Villot, acting in the place of the dead Pontiff.

At 7:27 on the 29th September 1978, Vatican Radio, broadcast the following:

> "This morning, September 29th, 1978, at about 5:30 the private Secretary of the Pope, contrary to custom, not having found the Holy Father in the chapel of his private apartment, looked for him in his room and found him dead in bed with the light on, like one who was intent on reading. The physician, Dr. Renato Buzzonetti, who hastened at once, verified the death which took place, presumably towards eleven o'clock yesterday evening as 'sudden death that could be related to acute myocardial infarction."'

The announcement by Cardinal Villot, had been released two and three-quarters hours, after the death of John Paul had been discovered by Sister Vincenza.

The astonished world heard the news with horror, sorrow, and incredulity. Many actually did not beieve it. Others, following the first moment of stupor, thought at once of foul play, millions assumed, the death of Pope John Paul, had been anything but a natural death. It had been nothing less than a plain murder.

The present author, who had arrived in Rome late that very night, was startled when he was greeted with a swear word, by the waiter who had been serving him an early breakfast. "L'anno

ammazzato," he shouted. "They have killed him. They have killed him," he repeated, staring at the radio set, which was blaring the news from the kitchens.

It was about 7:30 a.m.

"Poison," then he added, after he had recovered from the shock. "Poison. They got rid of him because he was too good."

The poison theory became widespread and was readily accepted. In the circumstances it appeared a plausible one. The man in the street had nothing to substantiate such accusation. But in Rome the populace, having followed their collective instinct, had reached a spontaneous and unanimous verdict.

The verdict became almost a certainty, when following the first startling announcement of the death of John Paul, the Vatican information centre, via the Vatican Radio, began to issue varied, confusing and increasingly bewildering contradictory descriptions of the event.

Naivete, diverse versions, obvious lies, additional contradictions, followed one another in ever quicker succession, and increasing frequency. The result was the multiplication of rumours of all kinds, which spread like wildfire all over the city.

For instance, to quote but only one of these, it was reported that Don Diego, one of the Pope's secretaries, had said, that John Paul, perhaps had died, because of a great sorrow, upon hearing about certain recent terrorist assassinations. Others mentioned the dead Pope's blood pressure. It had been very high. No, it had been very low. Several had opinions that plots had been hatched in this, or in that foreign embassy.

The speculation became wilder by the minute. Then, when the Vatican insisted that John Paul died while reading the superpious book called *Imitation of Christ*, most reporters, burst openly into laughter.

The contradictory reports of the medics did nothing to assuage the general unease. When the news that the morticians, had been summoned to the Vatican, within an hour or so, from the discovery of the dead Pope, the suspicions gave further concreteness to even more sinister plots.

Rumours had it that someone inside the Vatican, had decided to have the body embalmed after the discovery of John Paul's

death, to prevent the carrying out of an autopsy. The similarity of the sudden death of the Archbishop of Leningrad, was recalled, as a proof, that the second attempt to kill John Paul now had succeeded.

As for the identity of the potential plotters, the speculations were endless. The main villains, collectively were the Curia. The Curia had never accepted John Paul. The Pope, it was said, abolished at one stroke, the milennarian traditions of the coronation, the sedia gestatoria, and other traditions. He had given the new papacy a populism, which had degraded the See of Peter. That is why the Curia got rid of him.

The Curia, furthermore, had been embroiled with the financial intrigues of the Vatican Bank. The financiers, like Sindona, Calvi, Marcinkus, and the rest of the Catholic Mafia, were in it. Pope Luciani, had been about to disclose their financial corcuption, and they had reacted by killing him.

Some mentioned the Jesuits, whom the Pope had wanted to curb. The speculation, never gained ground. Many, however, talked openly about the KGB. The idea of the KGB was encouraged by certain interested Cardinals, who, had openly said, that they suspected Soviet agents, without however, giving a persuasive justification, for their accusation.

The speculations, rumours, suspicions, multiplied by the hours. Not only in Rome, but also around the rest of the world. The main verdict of them all, was that the Pope had been murdered. The Romans, became certain of that.

John Paul had died too quickly and too mysteriously. Only one Pope had had a shorter pontificate than him: Urban VII, who had been Pope, for only twelve days. To discover a shorter papacy one had to go back to the 16th and 15th centuries, to 1605, when Leo XI, had ruled as Pope, only 17 days.

Historical parallels, however, did nothing to modify the general speculation or the collective grief. And even less the mounting suspicions of foul play, bred, by the Vatican itself.

The question mark of the autopsy, remained, and indeed, assumed ever greater proportions, by the hour. Why should not there be an autopsy? Why such reluctance? The press had taken up the challenge. The media began to echo an increasingly

popular demand for some clarification.

If there was nothing to hide, then an autopsy should be carried out, it was said. If for no other reason than to stop the rumours. Unless there WAS something to hide. It was as simple as that. The Cardinals already in Rome, were divided. The controversy split the Sacred College itself. Some Cardinals, most of those, who later on, acted very suspiciously before and during the election of a new Pope, were against an autopsy. Others, those who had supported the election of John Paul, were in favour.

Several of the former found all kinds of excuses to avoid the carrying out of an autopsy. Cardinal Koening of Vienna, was one of these. His pledge, a very feeble one, was, that there had been no precedent. There had never been an autopsy of any Pope, he went on repeating. A wrong assertion.

Not a few Cardinals supported Koening on such and other dubious grounds. Others, however, expounded the opposite opinion. Because of the fierceness of the opposite factions, Cardinal Felici, the close adviser of John Paul, came out with a compromise.

Since the body of the Pope had already been injected with embalming fluids, he suggested it would have been impossible to have a correct autopsy, because of their impact on the corpse. An autopsy, therefore, would have yielded an unsatisfactory result, because of the stultifying effects of the embalming fluids.

Owing to that, Cardinal Felici, then suggested that three doctors, should examine the body, and then report independently, their individual opinion, as to the potential cause of the death of the pontiff.

Once the reports of the three top doctors, had been put together, then these were to be submitted to all the Cardinals, for their individual and collective examination.

After such examination, the Cardinals, then would have been asked, whether to approve or reject the idea of an autopsy.

By way of preliminary caution, then Felici warned the Cardinals, that he had talked at length with the embalmers, who had carried out the first steps for the embalming. They had told him, that the potential effects of the embalming fluids, had provoked a radical reaction in the body, making a proper autopsy a difficult

task.

Cardinal Benelli and others, however, opted for an autopsy, having been convinced, as they were, of foul play.

It was decided to submit the whole case to the assembled Cardinals. Benelli was supported by the Dean of the Sacred College himself, Cardinal Confaloniery, who, although neutral, declared that he was in favour of an autopsy, if nothing else, in order to stop the widespread rumours, that the Pope had been poisoned.

Cardinal Villot, made no comments, listening to all sides, impassively and seemingly unemotionally.

The assembly was composed of all the Cardinals, then in Rome, with Villot presiding. The proposition about whether to reject or to approve an autopsy was fully discussed. When it was put to the vote, out of thirty-four Cardinals present, five Cardinals voted against an autopsy, amongst these Koening of Vienna, the other twenty-nine, led by Benelli and Felici, in favour.

It was noticed, that when the result was announced, Villot, until then impassively icy, seemed to have been visibly shaken. After a while, however, he managed to resume his composure. And also the command of the situation. It must be remembered that Villot, now, was in charge of the procedure, and indeed, of the Vatican and of the Catholic Church. Because of his status, he could arrange proceedings, delay the carrying out of any deliberation, via any plausible excuse, or, even without any.

In short, he could manipulate, delay changes or bring in innovations, against which no one could protest.

The situation was in his favour. This was due to the fact that Cardinals were arriving by the hour, adding to the growing confusion, diversity of opinions, and to additional pros and cons concerning the wisdom or not for an autopsy.

The majority of the newcomers, had come with two objectives: to attend the funeral and, beyond that, to the new conclave. As the time passed, the central question for them, became less and less, an autopsy, and more and more who the new Pope was going to be. As his electors, they concentrated on lobbying for the new papal candidate.

When asked whether they favoured or were against an

autopsy, many appeared reluctant to take sides. Some pleaded ignorance, others were noncommital or did not wish to compromise themselves too openly, for fear of adding additional fuel to the raging debate.

The Cardinals of the Third World, could not comprehend, the reasons, why a Pope could have been poisoned, in a land without black or yellow tyrants.

Not a few, however, because of or perhaps thanks to, their political naivete,and numerical strength, helped to split the pro and con factions, by the hour. The result was that the Koening-Villot supporters, and the Benelli-Felici ones, polarized, into virulent opposition.

By the time almost all the Cardinals had arrived and had been briefed about the controversy of the autopsy, a full embalming had been carried out, without the knowledge of all the Cardinals.

The dubious tactics, had been made easier by the general confusion and preoccupation of the Cardinals, with the preparatory lobbying about the approaching conclave.

Nobody could protest, or do anything about it all. Since Villot, as the Cardinal Carmelengo, and thus as the provisional, but powerful head of the Vatican had remained in total command of the whole complex situation, regardless of any individual or collective objections, reaction or opposition.

The result, was a mystification of the whole complex issue. The embalming, and thus the total demolition of any potential discovery of foul play, via an impartial medical independent examination of the body was nullified. The more so, since Villot had decided single handed, and without any serious consultation with anybody, or rather with secret advisers, from his secret supporters, about the date, procedures and mode of the funeral of John Paul.

In short, he had acted like a Pope, to prevent the potential discovery of the real cause of the sudden death of John Paul. In this manner, he had carried out the dictates, or rather the plans, of those, who, might have been responsible for the "demise" of John Paul.

By so doing, he had helped the world to accept that the Pope

had died of heart failure. The impending ceremonies of the funeral, and even more, of the forthcoming election of a new Pope, plus, the efficient work of disinformation of those who had provoked the untimely "demise" of John Paul, did the rest.

Although the suspicions of foul play remained, none had been proved. The paramountcy of such achievement was obvious. The question marks about potential plots, and counterplots, of rival intelligence apparati, and political conspirators, had become ever more improbable, and even ridiculous. Villot and his supporters, had won a dramatic battle. And made ready to win an even bigger one. The election of a new Pope. That is, the election of "their Pope."

Chapter Twenty-nine

The Cardinal Carmelengo raids the Pope's bedroom. Deliberate falsifications and inventions. Premature instruction for an immediate papal embalming. The Pope might have killed himself. Similarites between the Russian Prelate's and John Paul's deaths. The "unusual" encounter of the Swiss guard with Bishop Marcinkus.

During the last audience which Cardinal Villot had had with Pope John Paul, Villot had been informed that his position as Secretary of State, had ended that evening, 28th September 1978. Villot, who had expected his dismissal since John Paul's election, was not surprised, but had remained impersonally courteous and silent.

A few hours later, at 5:00 a.m. the following morning, after a cool look at the contorted face of the dead Pope John Paul, Cardinal Villot had become the head of the Vatican. As the Cardinal Carmelengo he had automatically assumed the direction of the Church. This had made him a substitute Pope, until the election of the new one. Thanks to that, he could deliberate in the place of the dead Pontiff, with the most arbitrary papal absolutism. A privilege which he abused, with a daring, unparalleled, in contemporary ecclesiastical chronicles.

The abuse of his position, trespassed all boundaries of the traditional functions of a Carmelengo. Indeed, it could have been justified, only on one basic assumption. Namely, that he became engaged upon the covering up, of some thing which had been connected with the death of the Pope.

There could have been no other explanation, or indeed justification, for his conduct, which had been, to say the least, an oddly extraordinary one.

Upon first entering into the bedroom, in fact, Villot had acted, like one determined to get rid of some potential evidence.

Evidence, which might have indicated that a crime had been committed in the premises where he was.

He locked himself, in the bedroom, where he pocketed several items. These, although seemingly of no consequence or value, in themselves, evidently were of potentially incriminating nature, had an immediate investigation taken place.

He concealed all the medicines, which had been upon the dead Pope's sidetable. Such as the Pope's low-blood pressure tablets. He even took away the sweets, which John Paul use to take, whilst reading in bed. Not content with that, he absconded the reading glasses, which were still in place, when Sister Vincenza had first seen him dead. Further to that, he concealed even the Pope's slippers. These two innocent items, were never seen again.

John Paul's last will, which had been inside the drawers of the sidetable, had also vanished into thin air, as did various other documents, of a private nature.

Sundry other documents, most of them on the floor, were never accounted for. The papers, which John Paul had written himself, and which he was going to read to Father Arrupe, also went. Documents, relating to Cardinal Cody, were found, but not certain of the most incriminating charges, which had prompted John Paul, to have him dismissed, once and for all. Notes, made during the ultra-secret meeting, of the previous, days, had also mysteriously gone, never to be seen again. These items, had been seen in the Pope's bedroom, by the nun and the secretary, prior to Villot locking himself into it.

Following the seizure of potentially compromising evidence, then Villot, compelled the other two witnesses to "total secrecy," not only about the Pope's death, but also how the dead Pope had been discovered, and by whom. He put Sister Vincenza immediately "in-communicado"—in polite parlance he made her a prisoner, with no right to move or even to speak.

Following this, he distorted the facts of the original finding. He told the Pope's secretary, to say that he, the secretary, was the first to find that the Pope was dead.

Not content with it, then, Villot deliberately told another no less absurd lie and says, that the Pope died, whilst reading a

devotional book, *The Imitation of Christ.* The reason for it was obvious. To prevent the world from knowing that John Paul had been reading important secret documents, relating to personalities, inside and outside the Vatican.

Villot's description about the Pope reading the book, would have been farcial, had it not been so tragic. The more so, since the Pope had not got such an item in Rome. His personal copy, at the time of his death, was still in Venice.

Villot's travesty became the "official truth." Like his invention that it had been Msgr. Magge, who had discovered the Pope's body. Like that other fable that the Pope, might have died of shock, after hearing of the terrorist murders.

Not content, with such deliberate falsifications of facts, sequences and events, then Villot, went so far as to say that perhaps the Pope might have killed himself, by taking an overdose of medicines.

But more important, was Villot's sequence of instructions. He prevented Sister Vincenza from talking. He imposed absolute secrecy upon Msgr. Magge. He contacted the morticians, and, then instructed them, to inject embalming fluids into the Pope's body, knowing very well, that, the injections, would have stultified a potential autopsy.

In fact, there had been evidence, that Villot had instructed the morticians, to prepare for a total embalming, only one hour after John Paul's death, even before the doctor, had examined the body.

The fact of Villot's premature and indeed "incredible" urgency, for the immediate embalming, was substantiated by another no less incredible event. The morticians, themselves, had had a call as early at 5:00 a.m., if not earlier, minutes after Villot had ascertained that the Pope was dead. But even more telling, had been that, a car sent by the Vatican, had arrived simultaneously at their own address, at 5:00 a.m. precisely.

The timing and the coincidence of the above, are too striking, to have been mere coincidence. It is obvious that they had been well planned moves, taken by someone, who had the concrete knowledge of facts, which had already happened. Or, even, which had been expected to happen, immediately when they did actual-

ly occur.

The suspicions, speculations and indeed factual accusations, about the whole episode, went even further, when an investigator, who spent years pursuing the case, said as a matter of factual evidence, that, for the morticians, to have been contacted so early in that morning, establishes that the Vatican had spoken to the Institute of Medicine who employ the brothers (the embalmers-morticians) and had given instructions between 4:45 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.(1)

If accurate, or proven, then the disclosure of such an early approach to the embalmers, could prove to be a tacit accusation of clandestine involvement, in operations, connected with the sudden and mysterious death of John Paul I.

The falsifications of events, the early prohibition of the news of the papal death until 7:30 a.m., followed by subsequent contradictory versions of it, far from diminishing suspicions of foul play, gave substance, for the belief of some machination at work, in the whole affair.

The disbelief of John Paul's doctor, when informed of the Pope's death, did nothing to assuage Villot's verions, that, the Pope had died either of shock, or by taking an overdose of medicine by mistake.

Both doctors, the one in Rome and the other in Venice, the latter a man who had looked after Luciani for more than 20 years, could not believe the Pope's sudden death—nothing had warranted it—it had been their judgement.(2)

Villot's explanation, that he did not want an autopsy because, he, Villot, had come to the conclusion that the Pope had, unwittingly, taken an overdose of his own medicines, besides being absurd, had created additional suspicions.

The more so, when, he, afterwards declared that, had the autopsy proved that the Pope had poisoned himself, the general belief would have been that someone had murdered him.

The most damning indictment, however, was the fact, that the Pope's death, had all the hallmarks, which had characterized, the death of Archbishop Nikodim of Leningrad.

Pope Luciani, far from having died peacefully in his sleep, or even of an ordinary natural heart ailment, had had all the

characteristics of a death which had been artificially induced.

The Archbishop of Leningrad, after touching the cup of coffee, had collapsed at John Paul's feet, with spasms. When he expired, his eyes were bulging, as if they were bursting out of their sockets. Like the eyes of Pope John Paul I. His lips were extended to a grimace, and his gums were exposed bare. As the gums of John Paul, had been, when Sister Vincenza, had first seen him.

After Nikodim had expired, his fingers, on one of his hands, were half clenched, like the fingers of one who had tried to crush something.

The similarities of the two unexpected deaths, had been too striking, not to have been noticed.

The two men had died, a sudden death. But with a difference. Whereas Nikodim had perished, in the presence of the Pope, the Pope had died, when alone, in the intimacy of his own bedroom. With no witness.

No witness, however, does not mean, no intruder, or no interference, prior, during or after the Pope's going to bed.

Those who might have planned the silent death of John Paul, this time had made sure, that, there would have been "no second mistake," no witnesses and no compromising evidence.

The disappearance of the Pope's medicines, and personal items, like his glasses, slippers, and similar objects, told a very suspicious tale.

There is no proof whatsoever, that Villot was implicated, directly or indirectly in what happened during the night between the 28th and 29th September. In view of that, he should be considered innocent, until proved guilty.

Whether there had been some kind of intelligence, or, even curial machinations, is also, impossible to prove. The fact, however, remained, that a Pope, whose life expectancy was one of some years, or even decades, had died, suddenly and mysteriously, after only 33 days as Pontiff.

Another no less extraordinary feature, which had rendered the whole tragedy even more peculiar, had been the incredible speed with which any trace of the presence of John Paul, had been eliminated from his own apartment. Within only 24 hours, John Paul's rooms had been emptied bare of any sign, that he had

ever lived there, or even that he had existed.

Why such impossible haste, to destroy any reminders, and even physical memorbilia of the dead Pope? What was the reason which had prompted Villot to behave as he did? Was Villot afraid that some discovery might have been incriminating? Or could it be that others, might have forced him to behave as he did? Because he was afraid himself?

The question marks were many, as the gaps, which were never filled then and afterwards, by any satisfactory explanations.

Some details, of seemingly minimal import, however, might help to throw a light in an uncertain and darkened background. Such as the following:

Early in the morning of the 29th, Sergeant Roggan of the Swiss Guard, was astounded to meet Bishop Paul Marcinkus, in the courtyard approaching the Vatican Bank. It was 6:45 a.m. The sergeant had been so astounded by the novelty of seeing the Bishop there, at that so very early hour, simply because Bishop Marcinkus, lived outside the Vatican, in Villa Stritch, about 25 to 30 minutes from Vatican City itself.

Sergeant Roggan, after the first moment of astonishment, had told him the news. The Pope was dead.

Bishop Marcinkus, looked at him, seemingly without showing any apparent reaction. He stared at the sergeant without uttering a word.

Perhaps the shock at so dramatic news.

Some sceptics, however, asked themselves whether his presence there, at such an extraordinary early hour, for a notorious late riser, had been truly a mere coincidence?

Others tendered a more dubious comment. "Perhaps yes, but also perhaps not." Right or wrong, the suspicion that it had not been a mere coincidence, remained.(3)

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(1) *In God's Name*, by D. Yallop

(2) Dr. Buzzonetti, of Rome and Dr. G. Da Ros, of Venice.

(3) Some of the revelations in this chapter, like, that the Vatican contacted the morticians, early at dawn, or that the Swiss guard, met Bishop Marcinkus in the Vatican, unusually early, were drawn from D. Yallop's book, *In God's Name*.

Chapter Thirty

Roles played by the intelligence agencies of the Superpowers. The CIA and the KGB. Political assassinations. Instruments of national policies. Their efficiency and impenetrability. The assassination of two Presidents. Nixon is defeated by the CIA. Who killed Pope John Paul I?

The credibility of planned murder, by any contemporary administration, whether democratically inspired or not, at first sight, seems unacceptable. Yet it is a reality. Indeed, it is a basic necessity of government.

Political assassination, or the sudden "demise" of prominent personalities are operations, carried out within the framework of grand strategies, meant to finalize schemes, of national or ideological character.

Such policies, are concretised by special agencies, popularly known as intelligence apparati. The most glamourized are the CIA and the KGB.

Since each operates for a superpower, they are identified either with the USA or with Soviet Russia. But because the CIA, represents the USA, and the KGB Soviet Russia, the first, in the eyes of many, will not do any evil, whereas the second will carry out all kinds of villainies imaginable.

The implication, is that, whereas the KGB for instance, will not hesitate to murder, by bullet or poison, the CIA, will never do such a thing. Since the USA, which it represents, being a democracy, will never permit such a misdeed.

The reality, however, is otherwise. Intelligence machinery are there to serve their masters. And when, their masters necessitate the elimination of any given personality, the finer abstraction of good or evil, is totally forgotten.

The classic dictum, "better for one man to perish than a whole nation," is still valid today, as it was in the past.

In the case we have just examined, the elimination of Pope John Paul, for instance, had become a necessity, for both the USA and Soviet Russia. Depending, from which viewpoint his election to the papacy had been assessed.

For the USA it had been a disaster. For the Soviets, a quasi-disaster. But, whereas for the latter, the disaster, that is a neutral Pope, had all the potentiality of being rectified by the influence of a former formulator of a pro-Russian policy, that is by Cardinal Benelli, for the USA, the future would have worsened, because of John Paul, having fallen under the spell of a pro-Marxist advisor.

That would have meant, an anti-American, pro-Soviet pontificate, with all the political, religious and ultimately military implications, which would have followed it.

Whether the USA or anybody else, including Soviet Russia, had anything to do with the sudden obliteration of John Paul, of course, is mere speculation. Since, until otherwise proved, his death, could have been a natural event.

But assuming it had been purposely terminated? The question is not a useless speculation. The USA and Soviet Russia, would have used radical measures, to carry out policies, which they had considered of supreme import.

Since, we do not know the precise nature of those of the Soviet Union, we shall confine ourselves to those reputedly having been carried out by the USA.

Take the case of Vietnam. The USA, under the direct influence of the Catholic Church, for instance, or rather in accordance to an agreed common strategy, connived NOT to hold an election there, in 1954.

What had made them reach such a joint decision? Their fear that, had the election taken place, they would have lost them.

Having thus stultified the United Nations, the USA then, put up a fanatical pro-American and pro-Vatican puppet dictator, President Diem. Diem imposed Catholic mores, upon an 80 percent Buddist population, going so far, as to forbid the celebration of the 2507th birthday of Buddah because "Vietnam is a Catholic nation...and only the Vatican flag may be flown."

The result of Diem's attitude, was the alienation of the Viet-

namese people and, indeed, army. Army units deserted. The South Vietnamese resistance collapsed. Result: the USA had to intervene with her soldiers. Hence the USA involvement into the traumatic war of Vietnam.(1)

It so happened, that this occured when the USA had elected, her first Catholic President. Kennedy, realizing where Diem's policy was leading, tried to stop him. He warned him repeatedly of the folly of his policies. Not so much because of religious objection, but because Diem was dragging the USA into further military involvement, in Vietnam itself. Diem refused to listen. Kennedy, in despair, finally, did, what any other president, in his place, would have done. To prevent the USA going into total war, he decided to get rid of Diem and he "approved" of Diem's assassination.(2)

The appropriate USA intelligence agency was ordered to carry out the execution. One day, 2nd November 1963, President Diem and his brother, head of the dreaded secret police, who had imposed Diem's oppressive Catholic reigme, after devoutly taking Holy Communion, were arrested and promptly shot.

The USA had opted that a man should perish, to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Back in the USA, however, other interested parties thought the same about Kennedy. Thereupon, having reasoned likewise, took the same extreme measure—murder—and assassinated him, within three weeks of Diem's death.

The two assassinations, were interlinked. They were carried out by the intelligence agencies, serving the policies of certain interested parties, within and outside the USA itself.

The effectiveness of intelligence operations, depends mostly on their secrecy. The mystery of the Kennedy assassination, and of his alleged assassin Lee Oswald, assassinated in his turn, although in custody, was never elucidated. The shadowy individual, Ruby, again, although safe in prison, died of a "mysterious" disease, forensically detected, but, like in the case of Pope John Paul, inexplicably "providentially" timed.

When attempts were made to solve them, those implicated, either directly or indirectly, were also "inexplicably" liquidated,

either via the bullet, via providential accidents, or, via strange ailments.

Individuals who had been involved or who had had some knowledge concerning the Kennedy assassination, for instance, were dead or were killed, within the brief space of two years. Officially, no less than nineteen of them.

The agencies which caused their death were never discovered, denounced or apprehended. An almost sure indication of official or semi-official operations.

Another mysterious assassination, was that of Martin Luther King, the racialist endangerer of the established order. The list could be lengthened were we to add minor, unglamorous "murders," accidents, silent "demises," via heart attacks, pathologically induced deaths, or plain assassinations.

To mention only another one, the assassination before a congregation of thousands, of Archbishop Romero, a Marxist preacher, an advocate of Liberation Theology.

The State Department, the National Security Council, and local interested parties, objected about the turbulent priest, accusing him, quite rightly, of being a secret agent of the Jesuits junta of Central America. The former US Ambassador R. White, informed the House subCommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, that a tough politician, D. Aubuisson, had been almost certainly responsible for the murder of the Archbishop. Why had he never been brought to book? The answer had been a simple one. Because the presumed culprit, it was alleged, had enjoyed the patronage of Richard Helms, former head of the CIA.(3)

Similar cases, willingly neglected, bypassed or buried by official forgetfulness, could be quoted by the dozen.

The CIA and the KGB operate in the darkness. They move in a world which is all their own. They seldom give any account to anybody, except to a selected few. These very few, often are unknown, even to their own government. In many cases, even to the USA President.

This is so, because they are both enormous, impersonal, super-sinister, and super-efficient, super-secretive octopi, at the service of the most ruthless sections of their governments.

Their efficiency, is due mostly to their anonymity, and their impersonality. An individual, to them, is only a number, or a name, or similarly, an obstacle. Once the order for his elimination has been given, the order will be carried out, rapidly, remorselessly, and without pity.

This is due to the simple formula that National interest is paramount. The motto of the great intelligence apparati of both the CIA and the KGB, is, "My country first and last."

When national interests are endangered, therefore, the apparati, spring to action, ready for anything, against anyone, be he an individual, groups of individuals, nations, or groups of nations. Mostly identified by ideological slogans, and assessment.

One of the most typical instances, was that of the sinister activities of the Islamic Warriors of God, during Lebanon's invasion by Israel. After the USA sent contingents to keep the peace there, with other European nations, the Moslems attacked the USA Marines with devastating efficiency.

The USA, credited the deed to a leading figure of the Party of God, Sheik Mohammed Hussein Fadhallah. The Sheik, the following year 1984, became the target of a car-bomb, believed to have been CIA-inspired, which missed him, but killed eighty innocent people.

The USA had been convinced, that Fadhallah had been behind the bombing of the USA Marine base in 1983, when 241 marines were killed.

The accusation against the CIA was never proved or disproved. Although during the hijacking of a USA TWA airliner in June 1985, it was revived, during negotiations with President Reagan and the Party of God's representatives, for the freeing of their American hostages. (1 July 1985)

The Company, as the CIA has been nicknamed, has to be careful not to spill the beans, too openly, to avoid provoking a public furore from an outraged democratic citizenry.

The CIA, however, while careful about not disclosing its operations, even if exposed, could not care less, knowing fully well, that, its, very existence has been secretly sanctioned by, the government itself.

One typical case, illustrated the truth of this, when, during

the winter of 1984-85, the CIA was accused of having issued a "handbook" to its operators in Central America, in which, the CIA openly advocated kidnapping, "neutralization" and political assassination.

President Reagan, had to interevene, and to "condemn" such a handbook, knowing fully well, that it existed, and that it had become the "vade-mecum" of the agency. He gave orders, that those responsible for the handbook, should be fired, which, they were not. The President's "public" reaction, having had as its objective, the appeasement of national indignation.(4)

The CIA and National Security Agencies, are staffed by top officials of the government. To quote only one or two cases. General Vernon Walters, an experienced secret envoy, nominated US Ambassador of the United Nations in 1985. General Walters had been Deputy Director of the CIA from 1972 to 1976.

Former directors of the Company, became USA Vice-Presidents, like Vice President Bush, during the Reagan administration.

Their counterpart, the KGB, are equally in very high positions in Russia, and deal with equal thoroughness from juvenile technical gadgetry to dramatic killing of prominent opponents. Concerning the former, during 1985, for instance, it was discovered that the Kremlin's intelligence chieftains had read secret documents typed in the USA Embassy, before they had been even posted.

Electronic bugs had been planted inside dozens of USA typewriters, years before. As the documents were typed the electronic sensing devices relayed the messages.

The devices picked up the messages of the documents typed by the Embassy typists, and transmitted them to antennae hidden in the Embassy walls.

The antennae, relayed the signals to a listening post, outside the Embassy itself. That is to the Russians.

This intelligence listening technique was used, more than once, during the conclave, as we have indicated in another of our books, *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance.* This had been known to Pope Paul VI, who, gave strict instruction, for careful

surveillance, concerning the conclaves of the future. Listening devices were used during the conclave which elected Pope Luciani, and even more which elected Polish Wojtyla.

When Leon Trotsky was assassinated, in Mexico, Stalin, was indignant. Russia, he said, would never use such means to rid herself of her political opponents. The assassin, was apprehended, and served over 20 years in prison. His mother, however, went to Moscow, to meet Stalin, in secret, and was awarded on behalf of her son, with a medal. After serving his sentence, the assassin, one Ramon Mercader, ended his life in Havana, Cuba in 1978, pensioned by the KGB.

To believe, that only the superpowers can resort to crimes and deception, however, would be a mistake. When national survival is involved, nations, big and small, will stop at nothing. One of the most typical cases, is that of England.

During the Second World War, England, was determined, to bring the USA into the conflict, cost what it cost. To that effect, it cheated President Roosevelt, in making him believe, that Hitler, had already concrete plans for the conquest of Central and South America. To that effect, England sent him a map with details of Hitler's plans for the conquest of Central America, of the Panama Canal and of Brazil.

The map was used to scare American public opinion, and the USA President himself. This, it must be remembered, was in 1941, when eighty-six percent of Americans, were isolationists, and did not wish to be involved in the war in Europe.

"A secret map," Roosevelt told his audience, "is a map of South America as Hitler proposes to reorganize it."

The map, however, had been an "invention" of the British Intelligence. The doctoring of the map, plus the secret bribing of USA radio journalists, did the rest. Roosevelt was taken in and changed his policy of neutrality. Although, later on, doubts were expressed, whether Roosevelt, pretended to have been taken in by the forged document. Since his private papers, after his death, revealed, that he "accepted untruths and intentional deception as part of the life or death game of war."(5)

President Roosevelt had been hoodwinked by the In-

telligence of Great Britain, as Roosevelt himself, had tried to hoodwink an, until then, isolationist American pre-Pearl Harbour electorate.

The intelligence apparatus of the USA, like that of the Soviet Union, are, not only intelligence octopi. They are the amalgum of several paramount policies, formulated by national intelligence agencies. Such agencies command the best brains of the nation, and are in effect, the real operators of national strategies. These represent, intelligence, gathering, national security, and ideological inspirers. This is less so in the Soviet Union, because of the massiveness of its intelligence structure, compared to that of the USA. In the latter the major agencies, consist of the National Security Council, the Pentagon and the State Department—the true formulators of the policies of the USA. They decide what, or who is to be neutralized or eliminated. Their joint decisions, are carried out mainly by the "Company." The CIA, acting as a general umbrella also for the other two.

When President Nixon, attempted to discover the cables, which Kennedy had sent for the assassination of Diem, for instance, he came face to face with a blank wall. This, even though he himself was in mortal danger of losing his own presidential existence, during the Watergate affair.

If the USA President, cannot break the impenetrability concerning the nature, objectives, and motivations of the USA intelligence octopus, operating under the aegis, of the CIA, it is most unlikely that the truth about the "probable" but not proven intervention of the "Company" in the mysterious demise, of Pope John Paul I, will ever be known.

One thing, however, could have indicated whether the Company, or some other agency, or Superpower had had a hand in the whole affair. The radical changing of the Vatican's policies, from one of hostility to the USA and of cooperation with the Soviet Union, to one of amity with the USA and one of hostility against Soviet Russia.

And that's precisely what the pontificate, which followed that of Pope John Paul I, did.

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(1) As narrated by the present author in his book *Vietnam—The Religious Beginning of an Unholy War.*

(2) See present author's *Vietnam—The Religious Beginning of an Unholy War.*
(3) *Sunday Times,* 3.3.85. See also, the present author's *Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance.*
(4) The Handbook had found its way in the hands of the Nicaraguan guerrillas. See also *Newsweek* and *Times,* 5.12.84.
(5) Hoodwinked Roosevelt—See *The Times* 2.4.85
General: Books by Avro Manhattan dealing with items mentioned in this chapter include, *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance, The Vatican Billions,* and *Vietnam, Why Did We Go?* All published by Chick Publications, P.O. Box 662, Chino, CA 91710.

Chapter Thirty-one

Establishment of a suspicion. The Cardinal Carmelengo prepares for the next conclave. Stultifying a verdict. Preparatory moves by pro-Villot Cardinals. American purpled plotters. Cardinal Benelli prepares for his own candidature.

Following the funeral of Pope John Paul, Villot decided that the next conclave would assemble within the next ten days. "To prevent Benelli from concocting a plot."

He wanted to make sure, that this time the right candidate—his candidate—should emerge as the next Pope. The unexpected election of John Paul had taught him and his friends a lesson, never to be forgotten.

So far, he had won the battle concerning the mysterious death of the deceased Pope. The Luciani election, which he and Cardinal Cody, had greeted with such despair, had become but a memory. His fight to avoid a prompt autopsy, had also been won.

The fight, might, however, have been lost. The verdict of the two doctors, whom he had eventually summoned, had been that no autopsy was needed, because their joint diagnosis had been that John Paul had died of "myocardial infarct." The other one, nevertheless, the pathologist, not only had dissented from them, he had also insisted that to be "clinically positive" there should have been an autopsy.

The pathologist had been on the point of having his way. God had willed otherwise. The potential consequence of his victory, made Villot tremble. Assuming that the autopsy had been carried out? Supposing it had revealed that John Paul had died, because of poison, after all? What would have happened?

The majority of the Cardinals, 29 of them, had agreed to an autopsy. Luckily, the American contingent had arrived just in time, to swing the balance in Villot's favour.

The Americans, in fact, had unanimously declared that there was no need for an autopsy. The most assertive had been Cody of Chicago, followed by the other American Cardinals. A line taken by Cardinal Koening of Vienna, a firm advocate of "no autopsy."

Cardinal Krol, a Pole, had put his case in such a simplistic way, that it would have been unbelievable, had it not been true. "If there had been any reason to suspect foul play," he declared, "the Vatican would have investigated it fully." Since there was no such thing as "foul play," there had been no need for an autopsy.

His subsequent attitude, favouring a fellow Pole, during the next conclave, perhaps, indicated the true nature of his vested interests.

Another opposing the autopsy had been Cardinal Cody, the darling of certain elements in the CIA, a supporter of Villot, as Villot had been of him. Cody had vested interests in the Polish factor, since his diocese, prided itself, in a congregation of over 800,000 Catholic Poles.

The American contingent, had been supported by Austrian German Cardinals, with a scattering of Spanish American, an imponderable group, during the last, and even more, during the next conclave.

Villot, meanwhile, had advised that Cardinals should check their health, before the election of the new Pope. Many disregarded his warning. One who took it very seriously, was a Pole, the former scrutineer of the last conclave, Cardinal Wojtyla. Wojtyla had had a very thorough medical examination. Also an electrocardiogram, in case he had needed one, had he been elected.

His eagerness to have a medical all-clear, although almost trivial, nevertheless, assumes a significance, transcending the mere question of a medical examination, when seen retrospectively in view of what was to eventually happen. Particularly were one to remember how, a junior Cardinal from an obscure city of Eastern Europe, had been given the important task which he was given, during the previous conclave, in connection to the balloting.

Had that task been due to a mere accident? To luck? Or to a preplanned arrangement? That is, had it been, perhaps, the first

step to put on the stage, a man, who had already been designated, for a special role, in the first, and even more, in the second conclave?

The puzzle, was bound to remain a puzzle, until after the result of the second conclave. The fact, meanwhile, had been noticed by more than one Cardinal. Chief amongst these was Cardinal Benelli, who knew how the KGB and the CIA had already penetrated, the ranks of the electors, and indeed, were operating from inside and above all, outside the Vatican itself.

The mysterious death of the Pope, had impressed not only him, it had impressed many others, as much as they had been by the strange conduct of the Vatican. Or rather, of Villot, and of his unnamed associates. Or, perhaps, of his intelligence conspirators. For truly the suspicions, and rumours that the Pope had been poisoned, did not end with the funeral of John Paul.

The continued, unabated, in Rome and outside Rome, as well as in the minds of many Cardinals, who had come to elect the new Pope.

Although many of them, were innocents abroad, when it came to high politics, and knew next to nothing about the long and short objectives, of the superpowers, not a few had divined, that, the death, had not been caused because of the person of the Venetian Pope. It had been precipitated because the Pope had represented something, that had opposed some unknown mighty puissance.

At first, suspicions remained vague and unspoken. But then, as the Cardinals, exchanged views about the Pope's death, the impression grew that something had gone radically wrong, somewhere, owing to something, which they could not explain.

Not a few of these, began to feel that interference, beyond that of the Holy Spirit, had dealt with their plans. They had elected a man, because they had considered him worthy of a mission. That mission, had come to naught, all of a sudden, in a most mystifying manner.

Why? Who, or what had been behind the scenes? Could it be that great ideological conflicts, which separated the world, had something to do with it? Could it be, that intrigues formulated, abroad, had been carried out in Rome? No one was sure. Yet the

feeling was there.

Cardinals, asked themselves, why, whoever had wanted the elimination of Pope Luciani, had destroyed him and his pontificate? Was it because Pope Luciani, had been nonpolitical? Because he had been leaning too much to the left? Because he had fallen under the influence of left-wing Benelli and Felici? Or because he had not been very pro-American?

Had the KGB been involved in a plot? Had the CIA operated on behalf, of a pro-Vatican pontificate? Did the USA favour an anti-Communist Pope? A pro-USA Pope? Had not the USA maligned pro-Russian Paul VI? Had not the anti-Paul campaign started in Washington? As had the well conducted orchestration for his resignation?

In the minds of many Cardinals, the vague feeling of suspicions, grew into unspoken certainties. The opinions, of colleagues, helped. Several spoke against the dead Pope. Others, advocated a new trend, which was obviously favourable to a pro-American Catholic Church.

Certain Cardinals, had even started a campaign of lobbying, which made many non-committed Cardinals wonder what had motivated them for its initiation. Cardinal Suenes of Belgium for instance, and Cardinal Koening, had begun whispering curious admonitorial warnings about what kind of man the new Pope should be.

It was also noticed, how certain American Cardinals, headed by Cardinal Cody were openly advocating a "foreign" Pope. Why? Cody had been in three conclaves, in that of 1958, which had elected a revolutionary Pope John XXIII, that of 1963, which had elected Paul VI, and in September 1978, which had elected John Paul, politically a neutral Pope.

Because of his past conclave experience, Cardinal Cody was a veteran lobbyist, and knew how the preliminary steps, for the formation of an opinion in a conclave could, or might work.

The Villa Strich, outside Rome, had become a "lobbying centre," not only for the USA Cardinals, but, also for the cardinals, who knew nothing about politics. Or, worse still, for those ethnic Cardinals, who wanted to prepare for the shape of things to come.

Benelli, an expert in high political intrigues, lost no time in

counteracting the Koening-Suenes-USA Cardinals' gang. He did so, from the very beginning, openly, energetically, both inside and outside the Vatican.

His campaign of self-promotion, could not be left to the last moment. It must be remembered, that the formation of the opinions of the voting Cardinals, is seldom done, during the sessions of the conclave itself.

Their basic opinions, are formulated in the Roman restaurants, where the Cardinals dine. Or in secretive whispering corners of clerical cafeterias, or even more, in private encounters outside the walls of Vatican City.

Opinions thus exchanged and formed, are than taken into the conclave itself, where they are digested, accepted, discussed, approved or rejected.

Very often it is a question of timely lobbying. A small leading group of Cardinals, for instance, if well determined, can by the use of skilful tactical intervention, swing votes one way or another, almost at will.

The case of the French Cardinals, who had turned the tide in favour of Pope John XXIII became a classical example of modern conclaves.

The case of Benelli, as we have already seen, had been no less striking. Benelli, in fact, had entered into the last conclave as a "papabile." That is, as a papal candidate. He was determined to succeed Paul VI, and thus to continue his policies of cooperation with the Communist world.

After a short while, however, having discovered a stronger opposition to his aspirations than he had envisaged, he lobbied for the man, who might do as his "substitute Pope, the Patriarch of Venice.

The choice at first had seemed an absurd one. Retrospectively however, it had been a clever tactical move. With Pope Luciani, he was going to pursue policies behind the scenes, as he had previously done, with left-wing Pope Paul.

Now however, that the dream had so tragically evaporated, he decided to attempt a second time. The forthcoming conclave was going to see him emerge, as a resolute papal candidate, the forcible exponent of definite policies, no longer behind a Pope, as

he had done with Pope Paul, and with Pope Luciani, but as a Pope himself.

The CIA, or whatever other vested interests had been at work, including the Vatican Mafia itself, perhaps in collaboration with the criminal financial network of the Vatican Bank, and its American Director, had succeeded in destroying the pontificate of Pope John Paul, a simple, innocent, and honest man.

Since a pastoral Pope had been eliminated to further the political ambition of some great Power, or to minimize those of her opponent, what the Vatican now needed, was a strong politically-minded future Pontiff, who knew how to deal with them both.

And who else could have best filled that post, than the experienced Cardinal Benelli himself? Many Cardinals, this time would have agreed with him. The recent experience had certainly taught them a lesson.

Cardinal Benelli set to work in earnest, as did several of his supporters, headed by Cardinal Felici. Their lobbying began to operate at all levels.

Should the new Pope have carried out the pro-Russian pro-Marxist policies of Paul VI? Or should a new Pope resume the anti-Russian policies of the pro-American Pius XII?

A Vatican-Moscow Alliance, or a Vatican-Washington one? That was the question. A small group of Cardinals entered the conclave with just that great dilemma. Each was determined to win. And each could win, if they had been sufficiently skilful to influence the majority of the voters, none of whom, were familiar, with the formidable ideological issues, at stake.

Chapter Thirty-two

The ghost of Pope John Paul haunts the second conclave. The CIA and the KGB prepare for another fight. Cardinal Benelli makes ready for the papacy. The USA Cardinals plan for his defeat. Preparatory "groomings" for their "secret candidate."

When the Cardinals assembled for the new conclave, the second within only two months, the air was thick with unspoken suspicion, hidden resentment and apprehension. Although no one mentioned John Paul I yet, the dead Pope was in the minds of most, if not in the minds of all the participants.

Several of those had entered into the Sistine Chapel determined to avenge his memory. Or rather determined to redress the balance and thus, besides justifying their choice of him during the preceeding conclave, to thwart the efforts of those who had caused his death.

Many felt, even if vaguely, that his pontificate had been cut short for motives which they could not yet clearly comprehend, global political problems being outside their comprehension. But just because of such incomprehension they had made up their minds that, from now on, what the Church needed was a man who could handle and master such problems and the forces that work behind them.

The right man was there, in their midst, towering above the rest. He had had a vast experience with two Popes, Paul VI and John Paul I. During the last conclave, although he had been himself a papal candidate, he had given precedence to Cardinal Luciani. Now he had entered into the second conclave, once again as a "papabile," indeed as the main papal candidate—the right choice for the new papacy.

The man was Benelli.

Many Cardinals, in their uncertainty, had thought of him

from the beginning. But then they had become uncertain whether to support him or not. They expected guidance from those versed in high political intrigues. The guidance, like that which had emerged during the previous conclave, or duing any other conclave for that matter, would become identifiable after the first ballot.

Cardinal Cody of Chicago, a veteran in such matters, knew that prudence this time would have to be his key word. Also the timely intervention of his secretive supporters, or rather, plotters. Their tactics had been carefully worked out, in the American grounds, in Villa Strich. Also in several expensive Roman restaurants, where they had been lobbying German, Spanish, and Third World Cardinals.

Cody and company had two main objectives in mind: a) to defeat the left-wing Benelli, and, b) to elect the USA's candidate. The same one who had been made to suffer such a humiliating defeat in the previous conclave.

The American electors, several of whom had been recruited by the CIA for years, and whose exceptional heavy files in the ideological section of the CIA had evaluated their political contribution, had been carefully instructed by both agencies about the tactics to use during the forthcoming papal election.

They were reminded, for instance, how a small, but determined group of French Cardinals, had successfully managed to influence an indecisive Sacred College, in favour of a non-candidate, Cardinal Roncalli, afterward Pope John XXIII.

The formula: let the enemy first show its strength and then, when sufficiently sure of victory, strike him with a voting blitzkrieg to effect his annihilation.

The strategy, originally had been worked out by the special department of the psychological section of the National Security Council, prior to the conclave which had elected John Paul. Now it was to be resurrected with renewed emphasis.

Benelli, who had defeated the USA at the first conclave, by supporting the candidature of a non-papabile like Luciani, made ready to defeat the USA directly, via his own candidature. The CIA, having guessed his campaign, this time, left no stone unturned during the ten days which had preceded the conclave itself.

The USA Cardinals, and some of their allies in the plot, beginning with Cardinal Koening, set to work with unusual fervour to denigrate Benelli. They did that by denigrating the dead Pope. Also, by advocating a "new kind of papacy."

What kind of papacy? The new papacy had to avoid being under the spell of Soviet Russia, they whispered. It had to befriend the USA. Had Benelli been elected there would have been a renewal of a pro-Marxist policy, namely a new Vatican Moscow Alliance.

A Vatican Moscow Alliance would have prevented the USA from giving its billions to the Third World countries. The reasoning impressed the black and Asian Cardinals.

The German groups, secretly prompted by the USA Cardinals, also promised the Third World financial help from a rich West Germany. The German group, in fact, had already become fearful of a closer Vatican-Moscow relationship during, John Paul's 33 day reign. Benelli's influence upon John Paul had frightened them from the start.

Another no less influential group which, had succumbed to the American lobbying, was the Spanish and Latin American one. The Spanish Cardinals, still nostalgic of Franco's era, accepted the idea of a pro-American papacy as a counter-alliance against Communism, at home and abroad. Better a Vatican-Washington Alliance than a Vatican-Moscow one. The latter would have been a reality, had Benelli been elected Pope.

While all such tendencies were fluctuating in the conclave, they lacked any sharp directional impetus. Because of this they remained vague, and thus liable to the capricious individual wavering when faced with the approaching immediacy of the ballots.

One directional emotion, however, which had been concretely real, had done something to unite, even if subconsciously, almost all the Cardinals, with the exception of the American group. The shadow of John Paul. His ghost had haunted practically the whole of the Sacred College since the sad rituals of his funeral.

The shock of his sudden death, and of its aftermath, had been profound. The determination on the part of the electors, that such

a thing should never be repeated again, was widespread. The result of such feeling had been the unspoken unanimity about the necessity of the election of a new Pope, who knew how to deal with the global political forces, operating inside and outside the Vatican.

Chief amongst the many Third World and many Latin American Cardinals, who inclined to favour such a man. Their justification was simplicity itself. A left wing Pope would have sympathized with Liberation Theology, would have mobolized the Communist ideological support, no less than a programme of decolonization and of social reforms.

Cardinal Benelli had followed the USA lobbying with a vigorous counter-lobbying of his own, which had been epitomized with the reaction of the Third World Cardinals. And that, not only because he had suspected the hand of the USA in the current anti-Benelli campaign by the American group. But also, and indeed because he knew for certain, that one of the USA candidates was the junior Polish Cardinal from Cracow.

His suspicions had been roused long before the conclave, which had elected John Paul, had been convened. That is, since the well conducted "resign campaign" against Paul VI.

The intelligence, or rather certain ramifications of the intelligence rivulets of the Vatican, can be as informative, if not more so, than the super-organized intelligence apparati of the CIA and the KGB.

The frantic whereabouts of certain American Cardinals, for instance, their sudden interest in Poland, their warm fraternizing with fanatical anti-Communist Polish Primate Cardinal Wyszynski, and even more telling, their ever more frequent contacts with an equivocal Polish Prelate, like Cardinal Wojtyla, had indicated very clearly that something had been set afoot in Washington.

The indications of a secret campaign were unmistakable. Before even the CIA had started its "resign campaign" against Pope Paul VI, the CIA, in fact, had already drawn up profiles of leading papal candidates, and had identified those who would be sympathetic to the USA.

Following words with deeds, the CIA's "creatures" travelled

to Eastern Europe, to scout for the potential future pro-American Pope who would succeed Paul VI. One of the leaders of such an exploratory pre-papal journey was Cardinal Cooke. As early as 1977, Cooke went to see Wojtyla with that set purpose.

That was one of the first steps of the migration which followed, when USA Bishops, Archbishops and Cardinals treaded Cardinal Cooke's path. Many in the USA, and also in Eastern Europe, asked pertinent questions as to the cause of such American interest in Wojtyla. What had made them fraternize with him, a junior Cardinal, whose accomplishments had been practically nil, except for his dubious double-dealing with local Communists? Why the visits of Cardinals Krol and Cody to an obscure Polish prelate, buried in the little provincial town of an Eastern Communist country? The answer was obvious. Because these were nothing but preparatory moves, in a direction which the USA Cardinals had been briefed to take, since before the death of Pope Paul VI.

When, therefore, during the first conclave, this same obscure junior Cardinal from Poland was made to act one of the major, if not the most prominent role in the balloting, Cardinal Benelli, and not a few others, had their suspicions confirmed by so obvious a role.

The choice had certainly not been taken by the Holy Ghost. The whole affair had been astutely planned to give prominence to a man who had been already selected as a "papabile"—a papal candidate—from a power outside the Vatican. Namely by the USA.

The intervention of the CIA in the first conclave, of course, was never verified and, even less, proven. But those who had suspected it had taken place now acted accordingly.

Benelli had been one of these. That is why, before the second conclave, he had secretive contact with Cardinal Wojtyla himself. The two rivals, having failed to reach a compromise, their efforts came to nothing.

From the moment of the Benelli-Wojtyla encounter Benelli declared open war upon the invisible, but nevertheless concrete, USA candidature of the man from Cracow.

He entered the conclave as determined to become the next

Pope as the others, led by Cody and his purpled acolytes, had become determined to prevent him from being elected.

Indeed, as determined to have their own man, Wojtyla, seated on the throne of St. Peter. The USA defeat during the previous conclave had been blamed on too many people and on too many factors. Since, as the old saying goes, if a victory has a thousand fathers, defeat is an orphan.

This time Cody and company had decided there was going to be no collegial or collective orphan. Since the USA had become determined to achieve one single objective: total victory.

Chapter Thirty-three

Mechanics for the election of a new Pope. Plots, counterplots. The Austrian-American conspiracy. The left-wing Cardinal is near to success. The race between the two papal rivals. The KGB is defeated by the CIA's candidate. The bewildering victory of a Polish Cardinal.

After the doors of the conclave were closed, the Sacred College had already been subdivided into three fundamentally opposed nuclei.

The first was made up by the 27 Italians. The second of those who had grouped themselves round Cardinal Koening of Vienna; and the third—seemingly the most inactive—of the Americans and their "secret" associates.

The Italians had split into three hostile sections; the superconservatives, those who adovcated a compromise, and the ultra-left, none of which appeared to be capable of forming any cohesive leadership.

The Koening faction was openly for the junior Polish Cardinal. Unlike during the previous conclave, when they had used the utmost caution in declaring themselves for Wojtyla, following their equivocal move of electing him as a main Scrutineer, they had played their cards too slowly and lost.

Now Koening and his supporters decided upon a direct attack, discarded their masks, and came out in the open. The effrontery of Koening surprised even his sympathizers. He had thrown away any pretension of diplomacy or of piety to the wind, and had started the advocacy for Wojtyla, with a relentlessness of unprecedented vigour.

He had launched the campaign immediately after his arrival in Rome for the funeral. The first surprise gave way to suspicion. What had prompted Koening to support the junior Cardinal from Cracow, with such unusual fervour? Many doubted it had been an

inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The credence became that it had been the inspiration, not from heaven but from Washington D.C., U.S.A.

Koening had always been an ambivalent prelate, at home, abroad, and in the Vatican itself. His equivocal role in the election of John Paul had been noticed no less than his "secretive contacts" with the Polish Wojtyla.

Rumours had it that, now he had entered the new conclave with a definite concrete brief and, indeed, that he was acting for the CIA. The rumours could not be substantiated, and yet, because of their persistency, they had appeared to have had some justification. The behaviour of Koening, in the opinion of many electors, had proven that the motivation for his promotion of the Polish Cardinal had not been a mere individual whim, but had been motivated from a highly-powered political source.

Cardinal Benelli and his friends said so openly, before, during and after the elections. Koening had been commissioned to promote the Polish Cardinal, because that same Cardinal had been "elected" by the three main intelligence and strategic agencies of the American government, as the official USA papal candidate.

The secret contacts, which Benelli had had with Wojtyla before the convening of the conclave, had been conducted in the search for a compromise. They had ended in total failure. Not so much because of personal antagonism, but because Benelli and Wojtyla's supporters were separated by a divide, spanning two mortal ideologies and two superpowers as their political embodiments, the USA and Soviet Russia.

But if the three nuclei, now competing for the votes of the Cardinals, represented three powerful tendencies, none of them could have prevailed unless helped by factional outsiders. Namely, by the members of the fourth nucleus.

This was composed of those Cardinals who had not yet committed themselves to any faction. Or, who had been unable to make up their mind which side to support. Their intervention was vital since they were in the position of making the pendulum swing either way. That is, in favour or against the two main outsider contenders, the CIA or the KGB.

But if the conclave was split into various hostile partisanships, it was united upon one thing. The new Pope, this time, was not going to be a Luciani-type of man. They were all determined to select a Cardinal with a strong personality; possibly a man with a religious and ideological iron fist. In short, a Pope either of the extreme right or of the extreme left.

In political terms that meant a Pope who was going to have the full and total support of one of the great superpowers. That is, a creature of the Soviet Union or of the USA.

After singing the Veni Creator Spiritus the Cardinals, during their first ballot, seemed to have decided simultaneously for both. A good portion of them voted for an arch-conservative, traditionalist anti-Russian and a follower of anti-Communist Pope Pius XII, Cardinal Siri of Genoa. Siri topped the poll with 23 votes. His counterpart, Cardinal Benelli, got one vote less, totalling 22 votes. Left and right had started with a fairly even balance.

The patterns had already taken shape, even if embryonically. Extreme right, versus extreme left.

Cardinal Felici, a friend of Benelli, but a left-wing conservative, received a surprising seventeen votes. These could have counted, had the tide turned in Benelli's favour.

Another Italian non-committed Cardinal got 15 votes. Wojtyla got five. According to observant Cardinals, Wojtyla had frowned at the number; whether with surprise or disappointment it had been difficult to assess. Cardinal Koening, on the other hand, had looked openly disappointed. The black Cardinal Gantin, who had voiced his wish to change things in the Church, got three.

The second ballot shaped even more clearly capricious indicative trends. The super-conservative Siri lost eleven votes, while the liberal minded Felici got thirty votes. The greatest surprise, however, had been that Benelli had received forty votes.

Wojtyla had polled nine votes. Many Cardinals became openly puzzled by the Polish Cardinal's collection of votes. For no apparent motivation, Koening seemed pleased. He had looked hopefully at Wojtyla, as well as at those whom he had vigorously

lobbied before the conclave. He gave a special smile and had nodded at a Spanish Cardinal, Enrique y Tarancon, who had voted for Wojtyla, spurred by Koening, who had buttonholed him between the two ballots, to get his support for Wojtyla.

Tarancon's "defection" had been a tremendous victory for Koening, since the Spaniard had great influence with the Latin American Cardinals. The votes of the latter were bound to play a domino effect in the next balloting. That is, to influence the electors of the Third World. The Asian and African Cardinals had identified themselves with Latin America and their Liberation Theology. Koening and Tarancon, who had already briefed the German Cardinals about the potential formation of a secret anti-Italian block, now set to work in earnest for the unfolding of the "third" offensive, during the forthcoming third ballot.

Their objective: the lobbying of the Cardinals who, so far, had remained "neutral." Many of these, apparently, had been those of the Third World. Their campaign was calibrated by two main items: a) it was time that the Italian monopoly of the papacy be broken for good, b) a new non-Italian pontiff, blessed by patronage of a superpower, provided with an unlimited purse, would have brought immense benefit to their African and Asian dioceses.

The first objective was directed against Cardinal Benelli. It was obvious that Benelli's progress had scared the Koening-American Alliance. The alliance, which had already been openly reinforced by three main American creatures, that is, by Cardinals Villot, Cody and Krol, had to recruit new converts, before Benelli made more advances.

Cardinal Krol, the most enthusiastic supporter of Wojtyla, it must be remembered, was the Cardinal who had entertained Wojtyla in the USA, while Wojtyla had entertained him back in Poland. Their amity had been not only a personal one, it had been purposely promoted for definite objectives. That is, the potential sponsorship of Wojtyla. The other supporting pillar had been Cardinal Cooke. Cooke had voted for Wojtyla, following Krol's advice, in the second ballot. Now Cody bullied the group, inciting Tarancon, Koening, Krol and Villot to more active campaigning. The five were seen confabulating in prolonged animated dicus-

sions. These had soon been turned into loquacious whispers, with another two newcomers, Cardinal Suenens and Marty.

The third ballot was a great disappointment. It proved that their scheming had failed to stop the Benelli progress. Left wing Benelli, in fact, had received no less than forty-five votes.

Cardinal Villot who had voted for Wojtyla in the first and in the second ballots, now became visibly alarmed. Something had to be done to stop the Gauleiter-Benelli. He gave orders that there should be an interval of half an hour before the fourth ballot.

The move was a dramatic gesture, meant at a realistic reassessment of the voting balance. According to reliable informers, Villot used his time to form a group of Italians and non-Italians, determined to stop the Benelli progress, at all costs. Consultation after consultation followed in quick succession. Villot and his supporters made it clear that they were determined to stop Benelli. Any other candidate would have done, even a non-Italian one, provided he was not Benelli.

Villot was supported by several moderate Italian Cardinals who, like him, did not want Benelli to make further progress. Cardinals who had been the pillars of Vatican bureaucracy disliked him because of his brisk, no-nonsense manners; hence, they named him "the Gauleiter."

The Benelli factor and the anti-Benelli group, however, had not stopped his progress. To the astonishment of all, at the fourth ballot Cardinal Benelli had got twenty more additional votes. That had made a grand total of 65 votes. His chance for the papacy, now, had become an almost certainty.

The discomforture in the Koening-Wojtyla camp had become so obvious as to be embarrassing. Koening, Krol and Cody looked unashamedly downcast. Yet they appeared to be still optimists—their "candidate" had got 24 votes. A good number, if it had been gotten during the second or even third ballots, but a hopeless one in the fourth.

To all purposes the battle seemed to have been lost. But not yet. The well thought-out strategy of the French Cardinals, a trick carried out at the election of John XXIII, now was set in motion.

During the interval between the fourth and the fifth ballot, the American-Koening plot was energized and made to proceed in top gear.

Koening, Tarancon and Krol, aided by Cody, began a whispering campaign about the disastrous consequence of a left wing Pope. The five German Cardinals became apprehensive. Koening stressed to them that Wojtyla had dealt successfully with the Russians and knew how to handle the Communists, in Poland and outside Poland. A good anti-Russian pontiff would have protected an exposed Germany from the menacing ambitions of Russian imperialism. A new Pope, fortified by such an experience, would have been an invaluable asset for the Church, and for Germany.

While the American contingent was busy with frightening the Germans, Tarancon, nicknamed "The Iberian Torquemada," was wooing and deceiving the naive but greedy electors of the Third World. Wojtyla, he told them, would organize massive help for their "poor countries," with "American generosity." They should vote for Wojtyla. All the American Cardinals had already done so, and were going to do so in the next ballot.

Should not they do the same? Was it not in their interest, therefore, to help the election of Wojtyla, who was the favourite of the USA? With a Pope like Wojtyla, who had the might of the USA, the enormous financial resources of America would have been at their disposal.

The two working lobbies added the ponderous to the ridiculous. Krol, for instance, attempted to exploit the simplistic outlook of the African Cardinals, by explaining that Wojtyla could swim like a fish, could climb like a leopard, could ski, could sing and play the drum. Could run and could jog. No future weakling Pope, he. And even less, a candidate for any sudden heart attack that might rock the Church with an unexpected death. A crude insinuation, put about by Cardinal Cody, indirectly against the memory of the recently deceased John Paul.

Cody, the most vindictive against John Paul I, became the most vigorous lobbyist for Wojtyla. Villot used subtlety and insinuations. Koening, the chief architect of the pro-Wojtyla campaign and by now, in the minds of many, the "chief agent" of pro-

tecting powers, who had sponsored Wojtyla from outside the Vatican, began a febrile campaign of his own. He had brought into the conclave lots of literature, against all regulations.

What literature? Wojtyla's literature, meant to sponsor Wojtyla, directed at the Cardinals who had not yet voted for him. He went round distributing some of the writings from a book of Wojtyla. "See what a wonderful Pope he would make," he then would add to each one of them. The exceptional mind of an exceptional new Pope. Koening's move had been a well calculated move, before the beginning of the conclave; part of a premeditated plan of a secret conspiracy.

The tension became ever more tense by the minutes. It had become obvious that the lobbying was beginning to have disturbing results. And yet, many of the Cardinals appeared not to have changed their minds about the man they had decided to have as the new Pope. The pro-American campaign, somehow, had been too blatantly conducted by some of its sponsors, led by Cody, who was privately considered a kind of purpled American gangster, and who many said openly, behaved like one.

When the next ballot approached, the tension became visible in the facial expressions of the voters. Cody, Krol, Koening, Cooke and Villot acted like punters in a horse race. Had they staked too much upon a loser? They feared the worst. Or did they?

The ballot took its course. The Cardinals appeared to be more confident than before. What did it mean? Nobody could even guess.

When the results were read aloud, several Cardinals emitted whispered whistles of approval, and of surprise. The "Gauleiter" Cardinal Benelli had received seventy-two votes. That spelled almost a finality for the rest of the election. Benelli needed five votes more to become Pope. Yes, five votes only.

But, if the victory of Benelli had been an unexpected triumph, it had also been spoiled by the no less unexpected advancement of Benelli's rival. Wojtyla, to the mixed delight and disappointment of Koening, Krol, Cody and Villot, had got forty votes of his own.

The gap between Benelli and Wojtyla, in spite of that, however, seemed, and to many was, practically an unbridgeable

one. Five votes from the papacy meant almost a sure victory. Yet, the possibility that some of the voters might change their minds at the next ballot, and at the last moment, because of the febrile and remorseless pressure of the gang of four, as the Koening-Krol-Cody-Villot group had been called, remained.

Several of those who had voted for Benelli, that is, for a left wing Pope, had been affected, even if surrepticiously, by the secret American lobbying. Because of such possibility, it was impossible to predict, with the utmost certainty, a one-hundred per cent Benelli election.

Villot and the gang of four knew that, and acted accordingly. The key man to exploit the situation and possibly change the minds of some of the electors was Villot. As the master of the procedure of the conclave, he had the power, not only to call the ballots and their timings, but also to shorten or to prolong the intervals between them. That meant to permit a short or a long lobbying, and thus to influence the voters.

Since he was one of the secret plotters, therefore, he used such power to exploit the lobbying factor. He did this by ordering that the interval should last at least a quarter of an hour; and even better, that the Cardinals should have light refreshments, and thus communicate with each other. Indeed, they should discuss the last results.

It was a master stroke, and an interval which produced fatal dividends. The aftereffects of the previous vigorous lobbying suddenly began to produce results. Cardinals exchanged views, opinions, and opinionated about Benelli as the next Pope. A left-wing papacy could have become a dangerous vehicle for the expansion of world Communism.

The gang of four intensified their projection of the protectorate of the USA.

The fear of a Communist-dominated Vatican scared some Cardinals. The allures of an all-provident USA enticed others. It was said, although never proved, that promises of an individual and impersonal character, in other words, bribes, were offered and were tacity accepted.

The interval, in short, became a farrago of intensified pressure, high-powered lobbying, the selling of fears, hopes, and

bribes. The plotters became bold, and in their desperation to save the peril of a Benelli papacy, they became daring and even reckless.

One of these proved to be Cardinal Wyszynski, the Polish Primate. Wyszynski no longer cared to hide the existence of the plot. And this to such an extent that he embarrassed even its main planner, Cardinal Koenig. Upon meeting Spanish Cardinal Tarancon, in fact, Wyszynski was overheard to say to him, "It will happen." To which Tarancon had replied in Spanish, "Si, esto ocurrira."(1)

It was obvious that they had meant that their plot, namely the election of Wojtyla, was going to succeed, even although the game appeared to be almost lost. It should be remembered that the victory of Benelli rested upon another five votes only.

Something had been planned and carried out during that interval of "light refreshments."

What, it was never disclosed. The meaning of the Wyszynski-Tarancon's exchange of greetings, however, had indicated that it existed. Also, that it was set in motion at the last minute. The planners had decided to launch a desperate last attack.

After the "providential" 15-minute interval, the ballot duly took place. The result sent shivers of fear and of hope in both hostile camps. Benelli, instead of receiving the missing fatal votes, plus, which would have made him Pope, got a dozen votes less reducing his total from 72 to 59. The score for Wojtyla had increased dramatically to 52.

The Koening-Krol-Cody-Villot-Wyszynski groups looked openly exultant. They exchanged congratulations with each other, and even patted some Cardinals, nodding encouragingly. The Benelli supporters became visibly gloomy, and even depressed. The papacy was escaping them. Another ballot and they might have lost it for good.

Wojtyla's behaviour was ambiguous, to say the least. He indicated that he knew of the secret promotional machinery at work on his behalf. Wyszynski, the chief agent behind the other plotters, had no doubt that the papacy now, with a further well-directed and vigorous push, was in their grasp.

The ferociously anti-Russian Polish Primate, in fact, became

suddenly incautiously bold, going so far as to approach Wojtyla, and telling him to accept the papacy itself. This, it should be noted, before the new ballot had even taken place, and Wojtyla needed a massive collection of votes to beat his rival.

"The Holy Ghost requires that you accept what is happening," Wyszynski told Wojtyla. His daring prediction, which implied almost a certainty of the event to come, was not kept only between him and Wojtyla; the other promoter, that is Cardinal Koenig, volunteered to translate Wyszyński's prediction into German and Spanish for the benefit of the German and Spanish and Latin American hearers.(2)

The broadcasting of the Polish Primate's prediction was done with a precise purpose, to influence those who heard it and advise them to prudence. Stop supporting pro-Russian Benelli and vote for anti-Russian, and American protege, Wojtyla.

The plotters had become so confident of a Wojtyla victory, even although at such a late stage, that Wyszynski and Koening then closeted themselves in the very cubicle of Wojtyla. There they confabulated with him. Their conversations were never reported verbatim. But a detail which was discussed by all three was which name Wojtyla should take once he had been elected Pope.

The discussion would be almost implausible, had it not occurred. They had advised him on the name because of their certainty that he would be elected. This in spite of the fact that their man, after all, had only 52 votes, as against his opponent who still had 59. Their positiveness of Wojtyla's victory at that stage, is the clearest proof of the existence of a conspiracy; also of its having been unfolded, at the last moment, by those who had engineered it.

Yes, the two Cardinals had gone even so far as to tell Wojtyla that he should call himself John Paul the Second. When Wojtyla commented that perhaps it was still too early to consider him already as the new Pope, Koening assuaged him with a definite promise. "Don't worry, you are going to be elected Pope."(3)

Koening, and even Wojtyla, had already known since before the Conclave. Two or three days prior to the beginning of the

Conclave, in fact, Wojtyla, who had had secret briefings from more than one USA Cardinal, had suddenly become very silent and reserved. The disclosure that he had been selected for the papacy, now having dawned on him, perhaps had begun to bother his conscience.(4)

The ballot which took place that afternoon, demonstrated without any shadow of a doubt that the plot was about to succeed. Benelli received 38 votes. Wojtyla 73 votes.

In the ballot which followed, at 5:20, the eighth and last, Wojtyla had 97 votes.

The conjurers and the plotters had won.

They had elected their Pope. A non-Italian, an anti-Communist, anti-Russian, pro-American, and a political simpleton, nationalistic Pole.

It was a crushing defeat for the KGB, and a triumphant victory for the CIA and its associates.

Their triumph had heralded not only a pro-American pontificate, but also the reestablishment of a new vigorous Vatican Washington Alliance.

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(1) This was reported by G. Thomas and Morgan Witts in their book *Pontiff.*
(2) Idem
(3) The present author cannot vouch for the authenticity of the exact words. Although Koening, himself, later on confided it to some friends.
(4) See also *I Segreti del Vaticano*, by Beny Lai, 1984.

Chapter Thirty-four

The triumph of the "plotters." The election of "their Pope." The new Pope's first theatrical trick. Humility thrown to the wind. The Polish Pope asks for champagne. Champagne party in the Vatican. The drinking, singing and revelry of Pope, Cardinal and nuns. The Holy Ghost and prayers forgotten. John Paul II, a Pope of the Catholic Church, or the Chairman of a multinational corporation?

Koening, Krol, Cooke and Cody could not contain their enthusiasm. Their facial expressions reflected their personal sense of achievement. The American contingent became instantly the focus of respect, admiration and awe. Everybody knew that Wojtyla had been elected by "them." Or at least, they had guessed that the invisible "force" outside the conclave, that is, the USA, this time, had got what it set out to get.

The victory had been a spectacular one; the tactics of its leaders, skillful and daring. Cardinal Wyszynski, the darling of the strategists of the Pentagon, who dreamt of the disestablishment of Communist Eastern Europe, and Cardinal Cody, the hater of Pope Luciani, could not contain their satisfaction.

A Polish Pope, as their friend! Cody started to boast at once, about his long standing friendship with the new pontiff. They had been and they were going to remain, good pals, he declared. He even, and purposely, called the new Pope, Karol—Karol and I. It was impressive. Krol, too, identified himself with Karol and with Poland. Wyszynski, as the Polish Primate, naturally felt that one of his sons, so to speak, had gone truly to the top.

As for Koening, the ambivalent Austrian Cardinal, the election of Wojtyla had been truly the greatest achievement of his career. The election had been due to his ceaseless promotional in-

trigues; some of them unscrupulous, and even, it had been said, "treacherous."

Koening had secretly promoted Wojtyla during the conclave which had elected Pope Luciani. He had sided with Luciani, after he had realized that the odds were against Wojtyla; even though the plotters had succeeded in their first move, the manipulation for Wojtyla, who had emerged as the Chief Scrutineer.

Koening had been the earliest Godfather of Wojtyla, ever since Wojtyla was an obscure Polish Bishop. It had been thanks to him, that Wojtyla had been made a Cardinal. He had recommended Bishop Wojtyla to left-wing Pope Paul VI, as a left-wing Bishop, sympathetic to the Communists. Pope Paul had fallen for the Koening trick, hence Wojtyla had received a Cardinal's hat.

The recommendation of Koening had enhanced the interest of the CIA about the new Polish Cardinal. Koening, who had cordial contacts with the USA intelligence apparati, praised Wojtyla's skill and cunning, and his potentiality for "tricking them," that is, the Communists.

Koening had known the new Pope during the previous 16 years. Krol, Cody and the others now looked upon him as the true promoter of the new pontiff. Cody became like a man who had started a new life. The danger of exposure, which had been looming so menacingly upon his future, now that a "friend" had become Pope, had vanished.

The last ballot had released such an immense sense of relaxation, and optimism, that the conclave had become transformed almost into a kind of "cardinalitian kindergarten." Perhaps it was the sense of emotional release, after the tension of the Benelli-Wojtyla battle.

Villot, the permanently icy, polite and courteously impersonal, appeared to have changed. He began to smile, to talk, and even to walk briskly, like one who had been relieved of some heavy burden. After the formal bowing to Wojtyla, he did something which nobody would have expected of him: he turned round and in a moment of rare enthusiasm, embraced the new Pope. His sense of relief had been that great.

A while before, during the formality when Villot had to ask Wojtyla by which name he would like to be known, and Wojtyla

had replied, as Koening and Wyszynski had already told him to say, John Paul II, Villot had approved with a nod, as if the name had not surprised him at all.

After that, Koening, Krol and Tarancon led Wojtyla to be dressed in the pontifical robes. Once Wojtyla had been robed, he was taken to the balcony, where he was presented to the crowd in St. Peter's Square.

Wojtyla, far from pretending any humility, or even bewilderment, genuine or otherwise, acted like one who had expected the task. His natural penchant for the theatrical came to the fore, at once.

Before his formal first presentation to the crowd in the Square, he had already concocted a linguistic trick, to ingratiate himself with the Italians; a trick with which public speakers, orators, demagogues, and the acting profession are very familiar, flattery and "pretended" humility. It was something which the new Pope had learned, years before, during his acting career, when he had been undecided whether to become a professional actor, or whether to join the Church for an ecclesiastic career.

The trick, so promptly conceived, was carried out with the professionalism of a born performer.

Wojtyla started his speach by flattering the Italian populace below. He asked their forgiveness, should he make a mistake with his Italian. Thereupon, he promptly made one, followed by a deliberate pause—a trick which the new Pope was eventually to use on many other occasions in the future.

After the balcony performance, the Cardinals adjourned to the Hall of the Popes, where Wojtyla, now John Paul II, received additional congratulations by the assembled electors.

Once there, Wojtyla approached Cardinal Villot, who had been there seemingly waiting for something, and asked him, with a directness which astounded several Cardinals who happened to be nearby, "whether the champagne was now available?"

Cardinal Villot, far from having been surprised at the unusualness of the request, there in the very heart of the Vatican, smiled, nodding with approbation, after which he made a discreet signal to somebody.

Almost instantly nuns appeared, seemingly from nowhere,

carrying trays with glasses and bottles of champagne on them. Most Cardinals stared at the nuns, and even more at the bottles, not knowing what to make of it. The more so, since the nuns were carrying not one single bottle, but dozens of them.

Several frowned, others looked openly puzzled, not knowing what was happening. Bottles of champagne? What was the idea? Was it meant to be a champagne celebration for the papal election? There, in the very heart of the Vatican, in the presence of the new Pope? If so, who had given the order? Whose idea had it been?

Many Cardinals stopped chatting, staring, not knowing as yet what was going to happen. Several, however, asked themselves an immediate question. How come that there had been brought so many champagne bottles? Who had ordered such great quantity, anyway? And, another no less pertinent question, when?

Obviously the order must have been given long ago. Before the actual election had taken place. If so, how long before? Since nobody knew who the next Pope was going to be?

There remained only one conclusion. The champagne had been ordered by someone who knew whom the new Pope was going to be. And this, long before the conclave had convened. That someone must have been none other than Cardinal Villot himself.

The explanation was not only plausible, but almost a certainty. Villot, as the Cardinal Carmelengo, had been in sole command of the procedures, and ceremonies, before, during and after the conclave. He had been the only man in the position of issuing such an extraordinary purchase.

The order had been given long before the conclave had taken place. That is, long before anybody had known who the next Pope was going to be. Or could it be, that someone had already known that the Polish Cardinal had been disignated to win the current election?

Is that why those who knew had prepared themselves to celebrate their victory with a champagne party? Had the Cardinal of Cracow also known about that?

Independently of this, however, the great mystery still remained. Who had ordered the bottles before the new Pope had

even been elected? To celebrate his own victory with a drink? And even more interesting, with a drink of champagne? This had never occurred during the many papal elections of the previous Italian Popes.

The people who knew, therefore, had known that a non-Italian was going to be the next pontiff. Namely that Wojtyla would have been elected.

Assuming that Benelli had received the next five votes, would he have had a champagne party? Did John Paul I have a champagne party after his nomination? It was said, that instead, he had cried; also that he had knelt to pray, in fear, humility and personal abasement. Not even Pope John XXIII, for all his prosaic outlook, would have ever dared to turn the Vatican into a clerical cabaret. For truly, that is what that assembly of purpled Cardinals had appeared to become.

Many of them, after a while, in fact, had accepted their glasses, and had drunk. Some even toasted, led by Cody, Wyszynski and Villot. Several, however, remained puzzled. How had it been possible for anyone to have guessed that the new elected Pope was eventually to ask immediately, not for one bottle but for three crates of champagne?

The question was of deep significance, since it implied the reality of a plotting conspiracy, which had had more depth than at first anticipated.

Wojtyla, himself, must have had a hand in it. Or, at least, must have known about it. His prompt asking Villot for champagne, as he had done, had implied a prearranged knowledge that such a commodity was there. In the next room.

Within a few minutes after the glasses had been emptied, they were filled again, by the eager giggling nuns. As the operation proceeded, it soon turned into a veritable champagne party. The new Pope, far from confining himself to offering one single glass, after having drunk his first one, himself took hold of a magnum of champagne and uncorked it, with the professional ease and efficiency of a waiter, filling the empty glasses of the nearest Cardinals. While so doing, he signalled others to do the same. The nuns looked in amazement, as did the most conservative Cardinals. Nobody had ever seen anything like it.

Would John Paul I have had such pagan ideas? Or Paul VI, or Pius XII? Koening, Tarancon, Cody, the black Gantin, all drank, and made merry. The new Pope continued to pour out more and more champagne to anyone with an empty glass. At one moment, he filled that of Cardinal Krol, patting him on the back. "I must return to Philadelphia," he then told him, "so that you and I can sing together again."

Krol drank, toasting the invitation. "Welcome, welcome, any time."

The words were heard by Cardinal Cooke, who, half jokingly asked Krol to sing. Krol asked, "Here? Now?" "Yes," said Cooke. "Here and now!" After drinking more champagne, Krol then began to sing, at first low keyed, then ever louder. The chattering Cardinals listened, surprised, then became silent, not knowing what to make of it.

After a long pause, during which astonishment mixed with embarrassment, was sensed by all, several Cardinals joined in and sang with Krol, lifting their glasses as the new Pope continued to pour more champagne into the empty ones.

Porcine Cody became even more expansive, and asked Krol to sing a special song called "The Mountaineer." "It is his Holiness' favourite," then he added by way of encouragement. Krol started to sing again, this time in Polish. The Cardinals applauded, while Krol looked questioningly at the new Pope, who started once more to pour champagne into the glasses of the nuns themselves.

"Sing it again," then he told Krol. "Sing it again and I will join you."

Some of the Cardinals were delighted. Others seemed almost ready to join in with the two.

Krol, after another drink, began to sing louder than before. The new Pope did the same, singing in tune with Krol in his baritone voice. After singing for a while in a kind of duet, finally the two lifted their glasses in a mutual toast.

After that, the new Pope poured more champagne, approaching even the giggling nuns, who had joined in the spirit of that purpled assembly.

Suddenly Krol, who perhaps had drunk more than was good

for him, embraced the new Pope, with whom he started to babble at machine gun speed in Polish, about something or other, while Primate Wyszynski and chief-plotter Koening listened attentively from a discreet distance.

A spectacle to remember. No less than the unprecedented culmination of the triumph of a plot brilliantly executed. The Vatican had certainly not seen anything like that for centuries. Someone recollected some historical precedents. The Borgias apartments were not far from the spot. Although separated by almost five centuries, intrigues, plots, spying threats, poison and suspected murder had occurred only a few weeks before in connection with the elections of three recent Popes. Unnecessary magnification of historical parallels? Perhaps.

Yet that preplanned drinking party, the result of a clever mini-plot, that general lack of dignity and of emotional self-control, that unecclesiastical conduct, and vulgar behaviour, had already indicated the character of the new Pope, as well as the character of the new pontificate.

Cardinal Benelli, who, earlier on, had graciously congratulated Wojtyla, and who had observed that celebration with polite dignity, looked on pensively.

Had he been elected, instead of Wojtyla, would he have celebrated his elevation to the See of Peter with three crates of champagne, with profane songs, and general secular merriment?

Why had Cardinal Villot already purchased three crates of champagne? With such miraculous promptitude, so as to meet the unexpected request from the newly elected Pope?

The explanation had not been that difficult to divine. Because there had been some preordained cognition of the shape of things to come, long before he and Wojtyla had entered into the conclave.

Since the death of Pope Paul VI, Villot seemed to have specialized in divining events to come. For instance, when he had contacted the morticians, even before John Paul I had been declared dead. Or now, when he had prepurchased that consignment of drink, long before anybody else knew whom the new Pope was going to be.

The puzzle of such precognition pointed to a most prosaic

answer. Villot had been part of a long ranged, highly sophisticated plot, since before the death of Pope Paul VI.

Benelli had had no doubt who had been the original promoters of such machinations. Because of it he asked himself a most fundamental question. Would those who had engineered Wojtyla's victory permit him to rule the Church as a traditional Pope? Or would they have transformed him into an indirect tool of their policies? That is, would the new pontificate be turned into a kind of multi-national ecclesiastical corporation, with the Polish Pope as its chairman? A chairman, who, for all his pontifical glamour, had to dance to the tune of his political masters, the USA.

The speculation, far from being an absurdity, was a probability. In fact, a possibility. The Vatican was going to be turned into a willing partner of the USA and vice versa—the Vatican acting as a subservient junior, in pursuit of a joint ideological and military opposition, against the peril of Russian and Marxist imperialism.

Benelli then envisaged, with sadness, which policy he would have pursued, had he been elected the new Pope.

Chapter Thirty-five

Who was the new Pope? Contradictory versions of his background. Curious lacunae about his personality. A Pope of the People or a Pope of the USA? Mystery of his sponsorship. The bishop who knew too much. He is horrified by the election of Wojtyla. His dramatic fears for the future of John Paul II. Did his knowledge about the papal background doom him to die?

When it was announced that the Church had a new Pope, and that his name was Karol Wojtyla, the teeming crowd in St. Peter's Square was taken aback. "Who?" they asked. Someone explained "E un Polacco."—He is a Pole. "What? A Pole?"

The strangeness of the name of the new Pope had puzzled the crowd, even more than his nationality. The puzzle remained a puzzle for a long time, in the minds of many, inside and outside the Vatican, not excluding those of Chancelleries of Europe and the rest of the world.

Who was Karol Wojtyla? Could one hundred and ten Cardinals have selected a man because so little had been known about him? If so, what had concurred to his promotion to the papacy?

The question had come to the fore, as a spontaneous demand, provoked by the unusual personality of the new Pope. His unexpected election, his physical appearance, and his bizarre behaviour had all begged the questions.

Those near him, as well as the crowds, were fascinated by the strangeness of a foreign Pope. And even more, by what seemed to portend, was going to be a strange papacy. The Cardinals themselves, who had elected him, or better still who had been persuaded to elect him, at the last minute, had been no less intrigued by it.

They had not long to wait. The champagne celebration had

shocked not a few of them. In fact, it had taken aback most of them. The initiators of the champagne jamboree obviously had been those who had contributed to the Wojtyla victory. Apart from the saturnine Villot, the outlandish celebrations had been initiated by the Polish-Austrian-American inner group. They had set the tune, the tone and the outlandishness of the first celebration. Not the traditional Te Deums, or official prayers, or private devotion for them, and even less, for the Polish Pope. But instead, merriment of a most secular kind, indeed, of a most irreligious nature.

Many of the Cardinals had certainly not judged Wojtyla as the embodiment of ecclesiastical refinement. The contrast with his predecessor was striking. The new Pope, in fact, had all the qualifications for playing a special role for the vulgarism of the masses. He was one of them himself.

Wojtyla had been a manual worker, although for a limited period, and looked like a manual worker, even when a Cardinal. He openly prided himself in his physical prowess, mountaineering, swimming, walks, climbing: he spent an unusual amount of time in sports, beginning with football matches. His rough physical frame, and his non-intellectual face, indicated lack of sophistication. The latter emerged at once, in private and in public, in his manners, lack of diplomatic tact, and personal approach.

In public his instinctive tendency to play to the lowest emotional common denominator of the crowds, by the constant use of an histrionic populism, soon had bordered almost on the clowning. This had culminated in his successful verbal ploy with the Italians in St. Peter's Square, within the first few minutes of his appearance.

Such qualities, if negative, however, were also positive assets for a Pope who had a natural tendency to "perform" before an audience. His training as an actor, now, had certainly been proved providential.

From the political viewpoint Wojtyla, by the mere fact that he hailed from Poland, a country noted for its archaic religiosity and national emotionalism, had identified himself and his reign, by the sure emergence of a genuine hatred for Russia, whether

Czarist or Marxist, and thus, automatically pro-American.

Added to this he was a "pragmatic Marxist." During the two conclaves, in fact, he had prided himself about openly reading Marxist publications, to the delight of the Cardinals of the Third World who noted the fact.

His own image as the anti-type of the conventional, theologically trained pontiff, skillfully projected by the mass media, fitted him well. Seminaries, conventional studies, diplomatic training, had been conspicuously alien to Wojtyla from early youth. Pope John Paul II's original ambition, in fact, had been to be, not a religious man but an actor, something which Wojtyla himself openly confessed when already a Cardinal. "I trained for the stage as a young man," he admitted to J. Michener of the PBS series in 1977: "Yes, I wanted to be an actor."

His ambition had been so strong, that when he finally decided to become a priest and applied to the Carmelite Order, he was promptly rejected on the grounds that his zeal was not for religion but for his theatrical profession.

During World War II, between 1939 and 1944, he became identified with many activities never accurately recorded except for the fact that at one time, as already mentioned, he did various jobs, had worked in a chemical factory, associated himself with Marxist guerrillas, and had women companions. Indeed, rumour had it that he had been a married man.

His physical appearance, his personal background, his wooing of the crowds, in short, made him the most suitable Pope for the launching of the Euro-Catholic-American sponsored communism with which the Curia-CIA Coalition wanted to counter attack the Catholic pro-Communist stance of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance.

One vital question, which few of the Cardinals who voted for him had dared to ask themselves, however, had remained an unanswered puzzle. Did John Paul II have the necessary perspicacity for carrying out policies encompassing global problems and the mighty conflicts of the superpowers? Even more important, did he have the vision about a Universal Church whose parish was the entire world and not the obscure Polish backwater of Cracow from which he had emerged?

But even if these questions had been answered in the affirmative, what about the twin traits which have plagued the Poles throughout their history: their emotional nationalism and their cultural Calvinism? When, during the conclave, two Polish prelates were asked about a potential Polish Pope they were horrified. "For God's sake," they replied, "we Poles are too nationalistic to be trusted with the papacy."

A few days later these same prelates heard that the papacy had, indeed, been trusted to a Pole.

Wojtyla's election, while acclaimed by his promoters, scared many, beginning with himself. "I became afraid of receiving the nomination" he told the crowd in St. Peters that same evening. "But I did it in the spirit of obedience."

To God, or to those who had helped him in his election? Or even more ominous, in obedience to the superpower who had planned to use him, to use Poland and the Vatican for the promotion of policies directed at stopping the ideological and territorial progress of Soviet Russia and Russian sponsored world Marxism?

Within less than six months, the first Polish Pope had already forced the papacy to careen towards a future looming with somber incognita and unprecedented perils.

When Polish Bishop Andre Deskur was told about Cardinal Wojtyla of Cracow getting the job of the papacy, the Bishop was horror-struck. "Impossible!" he commented.

The Bishop, a man who had known Wojtyla better perhaps than anybody alive, should have known. His friendship with John Paul II stretched back to their early youth when Wojtyla had lived in the palace of the Prince-Archbishop, Cardinal Sapieha, Bishop Andre Deskur's uncle.

While there, Wojtyla had studied for the priesthood, working in a factory by day, performing in the theatre by night, and flirting with the Marxist guerrillas; activities which he carried out while hiding in the Archbishop's palace until 1944.

As his closest classmate, Deskur came to know the most intimate details of Wojtyla's life, character and ambitions. These included certain events which had never been clarified after Wojtyla became Pope. Pressed to disclose the origin of Wojtyla's

priestly vocation, for instance, Deskur kept silent. He never gave any hint about what happened to Wojtyla during the great gap in John Paul II's career between 1939 and 1944, the war years, Wojtyla's twilight period, not to be found in any public record.

When asked about the rumours that John Paul II at one time had been married and had lost his wife during the war, Deskur said nothing, as he did concerning various other rumours which had been circulated before, during and after the Pope's election. Deskur's discretion was deeply appreciated by all those concerned, beginning with John Paul II himself.

The loyalty of the two men was reciprocal and lasted all their lives. Thanks to such a unique relationship, Bishop Deskur became privy to Wojtyla's ecclesiastical progress from its inception; John Paul II's only true confidant prior, during, and after the conclave.

The result was that all the intrigues and operations behind the scenes which brought Pope John Paul II to the papacy had been familiar to him, as they had been to Wojtyla himself. The more so, since Deskur had acted also as his personal and political advisor, the only man who knew all that which had to be known about the clandestine operations, about the candidature of John Paul II. This meant that Deskur was possibly the only man who knew about the identity of those who had selected his friend for the papal election.

Although Deskur kept always discreetly in the background, it is nevertheless known that he participated in several vital semi-secretive moves prior to the conclave which elected Wojtyla.

One of these took place at the Church of St. Stanislas in Rome, October 8th, 1978, only eight days before Wojtyla was made Pope. Rumours by then had circulated in certain quarters to the effect that certain influential Cardinals, supporters of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance, were prepared to make a "deal" with the Pope-designate, provided Wojtyla and his supporters accepted certain conditions.

Wojtyla and his closest associates met to discuss the potential "deal." The opposition, he was told, was ready to support his candidacy, provided he accepted "ideological flexibility." The of-

fer came from none other than the fiercest supporter of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance, Cardinal Benelli, former right hand of pro-Russian Pope Paul VI.

At the meeting there were present Polish Bishop Rubin, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Wojtyla, Bishop Deskur, and the secretary of Cardinal Benelli, the latter having deemed the encounter too compromising for him to attend personally.

Prior even to the meeting it had become obvious that the secret block of five had already made recruits in the ranks of the "progressives." Amongst these, Paulo Arns, Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Brazil, several other Latin American Cardinals, half a dozen of the Third World, and one or two from the Communist countries beginning with Archbishop Frantisek Tomaske, Primate of Communist Czechoslovakia.

Wojtyla's name by then had already been whispered, with the utmost discretion, in preparation for what was to happen at the conclave. One of the main engineers had been another Pole, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, Primate of Communist Poland, Wojtyla's mentor.

A formidable opponent of Marxism and Marxist Russia, the primate had fought against both with vigour, a source of continuous irritation not only to Moscow and the Polish Communist regime, but also to pro-Russian Pope Paul VI. Although initially he had supported Pope John XXIII, he had determinedly opposed the policy of the Vatican-Moscow Alliance from the start.

When the Curia-CIA Coalition began to formulate their plans during the pontificate of Paul VI they approached the primate for his support. Their idea of a kind of Catholic communism, sponsored jointly by the Vatican and the US, did not appeal to him. He flatly rejected their offer.

When, however, the "resign" campaign against Paul VI was commenced he succumbed to the plans. It was after the conclave of John Paul I, however, that he decided to join the secret preparation for the election of Wojtyla having realized by then how John Paul I had been nothing but a decoy for those who were still determined to carry on with Paul VI's Vatican-Moscow Alliance.

But if the little meeting at St. Stanislas Church had been dominated by Polish tribalism sponsored by the absent Polish primate, it was supported, even if in "absentia," by highly motivated individuals operating in the ecclesiastic and lay fields.

Prominent amongst these were Americans of Polish origin—headed by Msgr. Krol of Philadelphia, notorious for his Polish flights in a helicopter provided by a rich friend—was Cardinal Cody of Chicago, who, although not a Pole, nevertheless had more vested interest in the election of a Polish Pope than perhaps any other high prelate.

Msgr. Cody had been the dominant figure in the largest ethnic minority in the USA, his diocese nearing 800,000 Poles. He had the richest Catholic administration in America, and one of the most influential political pressure groups at a local and international level at his disposal. Politicians in Chicago and Washington, especially those of Polish origin, behaved like puppets at Archbishop Cody's financial and ecclesiastic nods.

The financial and numerical magnificence of Cody, moreover, could influence also the 12 million Catholic Americans of Polish origin in addition to other ethnic Catholic minorities in the USA. Furthermore, rumours had it that Cody had helped coffers of the Vatican at "delicate" intervals; and that his contributions to the St. Peter's pence had been the highest for decades. Also, that he had "inspired" a lobby in the USA and in Rome, for the election of his "friend" Wojtyla.

After his election, Pope Wojtyla displayed a special favouritism for Cardinal Cody even though the latter was under Federal investigation for the misuse of Church tax free funds.

Bishop Deskur knew most, if not all of the wheeling-dealing which had been going on since the Curia-CIA promotional campaign had been launched. As the confidant of Wojtyla he had been privy to all the manipulations, intelligence intrigues, political deals, and more. Because he had been unofficially at the centre of them all, he had come to know the identity of the Curia-CIA personalities, their origin, sources, and last, but not least, the promoting superpower which was operating behind them. Although gratified that a Pole had become Pope, he, nevertheless, like Polish Cardinal Wyszynski, had become increasingly perturbed

about the new direction which Wojtyla's hidden sponsors intended him to lead the Church.

Wojtyla's personal "weaknesses" were too deep-rooted not to affect his behaviour as a Pope: egocentrism, personal vanity, and volubility. "One can tell that Wojtyla studied for the stage," commented a Cardinal, after the election. "He does not miss a trick."

His personal vanity, to be always the principal actor, never left him since his early days. The most striking example occurred in 1981 when he insisted upon visiting Japan. Although advised against it by experienced Vatican officials, he flew there, a country with only 400,000 Catholics out of a total non-Christian population of 135 millions.

The crowd who came to greet him was led by Cardinal Asahive Satawaki. It consisted of fewer than 100 people. Only one of the 12 television stations in Tokyo carried his arrival, and that was only for a few seconds. The visit was shatteringly humiliating for a man used to the rapturous welcome of millions. The more so, since no less than 8000 policemen, paid by a polite but brooding government, had been assigned to provide for his security.

Pope Wojtyla never recovered from the experience and brooded for weeks when in the Vatican. Like a prima donna, he took the whole experience as an affront to him "personally."

This same thirst for personal adulation emerged only hours after his election as Pope when he brazenly asked a group of American reporters to "be good to me." After which, to ingratiate himself with them he cupped his hands like a megaphone and "shouted" his blessing to the milling crowds. Such behaviour was more fit for a "pro-football linebacker," than for a Pope, no matter how proletarian-minded as some promptly commented.

The description was nearer reality than intended. Prior to his official investiture, in fact, Wojtyla gave personal orders that the inaugural mass, the most solemn ceremony of a new papacy, should be celebrated in the morning. The reason? To permit the watching of soccer games in the afternoon on the TV screen.

Also, as somebody commented, probably to turn the TV on in his apartment to watch the soccer game himself. The following

year the new Pope took tennis lessons from a 27 year old, Wojtek Fibak, Poland's top tennis pro. More telling, when he visited Poland as a Pope (1979), he dismissed all elderly nuns on his Vatican staff, and chose instead six other young Poles. Heading them was Sister Teodata, only 35, tall, slim, and beautiful, who types and sings. "A dubious choice for a Pope who claims asceticism to avoid carnal temptations," as a Vatican old-hand commented, after seeing Sister Teodata.

The new Pope had not even had the time to recover from the election ceremony before he had to rush to the Gemelli Clinic in Rome. Bishop Deskur, his closest friend, had suffered a severe heart attack shortly before the papal nomination. He was now seriously ill.

Pope John Paul II knelt by the bedside weeping. When told that Deskur would not recover he wept again, as the Bishop lay there unconscious. When afterwards Deskur, having regained consciousness, was told that his friend Wojtyla had been elected Pope he became horrified. "Who will protect him from them?" he said and tried to get up from the bed. "Now I must recover." Then he added, trying to get up, "Yes, I must recover."

John Paul visited him again soon afterwards, dressed in black. The Bishop's health deteriorated, however, until finally he was sent to Switzerland. Shortly afterwards, he died, seemingly of a heart attack, but never accurately assessed, leaving heart specialists "baffled."

Bishop Deskur was only 54 years old.

What Bishop Deskur meant by "them" was never explained. Whether he alluded to the elusive sponsors of Wojtyla, or to some other unknown elements connected with the future Vatican-Washington strategy, is difficult to say. The fact that Bishop Deskur became suddenly ill only a few days before the papal election, when Wojtyla perhaps needed advice, might have been a coincidence. Yet, the timing of his demise could justify legitimate suspicions.

A primary dictum of any efficient intelligence directorate is that the liquidation of individuals who can become an intelligence embarrassment, is not only justifiable, but is also a most immediate and dire necessity.

Chapter Thirty-six

The CIA briefs the new Pope. The USA-Vatican joint political targets. Latin America and Liberation Theology. The dismantling of Eastern Europe. The USA-Vatican Trojan Horse in Poland: Solidarity. The new pontificate, as a global instrument, of the USA, anti-Russian, anti-Marxist world strategy.

After only one week, and even less, the CIA set to work. Pope Wojtyla was briefed about the role he had to play. Total personal dedication to the prosecution of the policies, to be operated by the CIA, or rather, by the entity which was behind it, that is, by the National Security Council. And obviously, behind the latter, by the State Department itself.

Presidential approbation had already set in motion the whole machinery, which had been suspended after the election of Pope Luciani, who had been considered, by all three USA's executive policy formulaters, as "the wrong Pope."

The two-pronged grand strategies of the USA, Pope Wojtyla was told, had been initiated originally while Pope Paul VI had been still alive. In fact, even before the CIA had launched its "resign campaign."

It should have been made to operate as soon as their "new Pope" had been elected. It had been "shelved" with the election of Pope John Paul I, and reactivated with his providential demise. Now it was going to be set in motion "with renewed speed," with John Paul II.

President Carter and the National Security Council, already caught in the net of a Persian imbroglio with the doomed Shah of Iran, had simultaneously embarked upon a policy of direct intervention in two of the most delicate regions of the world. Nearer to home, in Central and South America. In the West, in Eastern Europe, the Marxist satrapy of Soviet Russia.

Almost a decade before, USA's operations there had ended in total disaster. Her most spectacular fiasco had culminated with the "imprisonment" of the USA's principal partner, in the venture, of Communist Hungary's Cardinal Mindzenty, who had incarcerated himself, for more than ten years, in the American Embassy of Budapest, to avoid arrest and possible execution.

Cardinal Mindzenty and the CIA had plotted, together, with Catholic Hungarians, to overthrow the Hungarian Regime, by diplomatic intriges and by the use of force. Money for the purchase of arms, had been provided by the CIA; their objective, the installation of King Otto of Hapsburg, the USA protege, upon the Hungarian throne. The attempt ended in disaster.(1)

Since then the USA had conceived a more subtle policy: the penetration of Communist regimes, via workers units, intermingled with parallel cells of the Catholic Church. The new policy had to start in Poland. Now with John Paul II, the time had come for action.

The CIA told Pope Wojtyla that he had to cooperate at once. Also that the USA's objectives came first.

Pope Wojtyla, although surprised at the speed and ambition of the USA plans, accepted. And set to work. His cooperation was easied, not only by the encouragement of Cardinal Wyszynski, but also because President Carter had been brainwashed by another Pole, a pillar of the National Security Council, a stubborn anti-Communist, anti-Russian, and Catholic who acted as his personal adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The CIA briefed the new Pope with the tenacious pressure of a sledgehammer, at ever shorter intervals. Casaroli, the former adviser of Paul VI, briefed him about the USA's Eastern Europe grand plan: the double disestablishment of Communist-Catholic Poland.

John Paul II was so impressed by Casaroli that he promised to make him his Secretary of State, in place of Cardinal Villot. The latter became bitter, the first weeks of the new pontificate.

To the USA, the most immediate task, however, was nearer home. The neutralization of Liberation Theology. The USA had become concerned about the double Marxist-Catholic subversion there. Its main sponsors, the Jesuits. Pope John Paul was asked,

or rather commanded, as a Vatican official was later to relate, "to disperse the Jesuit menace."

The Jesuitical menace was political, economic and military. It was preparing another potential Marxist Cuba, next door to the USA. Turbulent priests and high prelates, including Cardinals, were fermenting revolution, under the double banner of Lenin and Jesus—and thus by proxy of the Vatican.

When shortly afterwards, in 1980, one of these turbulent Jesuitically inspired priests, Arcbishop Romero of San Salvador, was shot dead, after having preached a subversive sermon, the Pope was told not to make a fuss about it. The "advice" had come directly from Washington. Since the suspected murderer, a right wing leader, was believed to have acted on behalf of the CIA itself.

Pope John Paul II duly complied. He refused to go to the funeral of the "martyr Archbishop," as the Marxist media called him. Indeed, he abstained even from condemning the murder.(2)

But if the Latin American question was urgent, an even more pressing one was that of setting in motion the double USA-Vatican subversion machinery in Poland. The Polish Pope was its ideal instrument.

Although his radicalism was tempered with theological conservatism, his native nationalism was the strongest motivation for associating himself with the USA's project. John Paul II became not only cooperative but eager to help. He promised the full assistance of the Catholic Church. Even so, the enterprise needed money. The National Security Council supplied millions. The Vatican had to help with funds as well, inside Poland. The Polish clergy were asked for contributions. But since theirs was limited, the USA demanded that the Vatican should provide financial funds for the rebelling trade unions.

The Vatican Bank was asked to help. Since its director was the Pope's personal friend, Bishop Marcinkus obliged. Millions of dollars were found and syphoned into Poland., Marcinkus had consolidated his friendship with Pope Wojtyla, not only because he could speak the same dialect as the Pope, but also because they both went out jogging together, in the Vatican gardens.

Pope Wojtyla had assured Marcinkus that his post as the

Director of the Vatican Bank was safe. Nobody would ever persuade him to sack Marcinkus. The assurance provided the millions from the Vatican Bank. Part of the money, also from the Vatican Bank associates, who later went bankrupt, with a loss of $1,400 million dollars.

Now what was needed was a papal visit. This too was arranged, for the spring of 1979. The Polish Government objected, but then accepted with reluctance. Their intelligence system knew already what was afoot. Moscow warned them of a substantial subversion. The KGB, having penetrated both the Polish administration, trade unions, the hierarchy and the Vatican, had a far better picture of what was being prepared than even the CIA and USA Government, themselves.

The Polish Pope went to Poland on a triumphal tour, lasting one week. The warning of the KGB proved prophetic. The papal visit, plus the papal and CIA millions, spawned a revolutionary religious-political creature, called Solidarity.

Workers surged en masse against the Regime, priests thundered their support from the pulpits. Additional millions of dollars poured in from the Vatican and the CIA. Solidarity leaders went openly to Rome to take counsel from the Polish Pope. His Polish Holiness blessed and encouraged them, without restraint, semblance of neutrality or the slightest precautions.

Even the dullest of political observers noticed the striking contrast between the pastoral pontificate of John Paul I with that of John Paul II. The latter had become an anti-Communist and anti-Russian crusader, the supporter of the USA's strategy against the Soviet Empire. Many approved. Others became cautious at such an obvious involvement in the political struggle of the two superpowers. Not a few began to ask themselves whether the disappearance of the Venetian Pope had been a mere coincidence, after all. The suspicions about a well premeditated "demise" were revived and multiplied. The parallel anti-Russian, pro-American policies of the Vatican and the USA were too strikingly similar to have been a coincidence. The coordination of their joint operations had all the characteristics of a well premeditated operation.

Could it be that the providential death of the previous Pope

had been premeditated after all? Could it be that the joint Vatican-USA subversion policy of his successor had been not only premeditated, but also had been carried out by the same agency?

The subsequent Vatican-USA move confirmed the suspicions. This became identified with the joint Vatican-USA operations against the Jesuitical subversion in Latin America. There the USA asked the Polish Pope to act, swiftly, determinedly and with "immediate ruthlessness."

The Pope castigated their Father General. Arrupe was told to restrain his battalions. Father Arrupe refused. Pope John Paul summoned him to Rome twice. But in vain. Arrupe told the Pope that Marx and Christ was the right religious ideological amalgam, for Latin America. Indeed, for other parts of the world.

Pope John Paul explained that the USA's support was more important than the Arrupe revolution. "The USA, after all," he said, "was going to liberate Catholic Poland, and possibly the rest of Eastern Europe." Arrupe replied that the Church's future was to be found in a revolutionary Catholic Latin American continent, and not by bluffing with Soviet Russia in Eastern Europe.

The Pope then ordered the Latin American hierarchy to neutralize the Jesuits operations. Arrupe counter-ordered. John Paul dismissed Arrupe, something which had never occurred since the emergence of the Jesuit Order.

Once without a leader, the Jesuits' top brass were summoned to Rome, where they were castigated by an irascible John Paul, who threatened them with potential "extinction." The Jesuits felt humiliated. The more so, since the Pope had adopted another fanatical institution, only recently born. The Opus Dei. The Opus Dei, another Spanish religious invention like that of the Jesuits, was their contemporary counterpart and rival. It was even rumoured that John Paul himself had become one of its practicing members. He had already gone so far as to initiate the canonization of its founder who had died a decade or two before.

After following a dark period of anguish and incertitude and doubts, the Jesuits' battalions, mostly those in the USA, softened their revolutionary posture, in 1982-3-4, and John Paul finally permitted them to elect a new Father General, which they did.[3]

The Marx-Christ subversion in Latin America lost its

original impetus. But although seemingly emasculated, it promptly went underground. Marxist inspired regimes initiated guerrilla operations. These threatened the stability of the government of Central America. To insure their existence, the USA began to intervene in the region; at first clandestinely, and then openly, with money, arms and men.

The subcontinent had been transformed into a potential anti-USA powder keg. The alarming initiator of a Central American Vietnam-type of war.

To soften the impending expansion of the danger, the Pope was told to go on an extensive tour of South America. During his peregrinations John Paul was instructed to "scold" the Jesuitical revolutionaries. This the Pope did. To the genuine chagrin of most of the Latin American Cardinals who had so helped him to become Pope, with the hope that he would have encouraged Liberation Theology.

The USA was pleased. "Their Pope" was cooperating, according to plans. The Vatican-Washington Alliance of yore had indeed been resuscitated. It was operating like the original one. If not better.

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(1) For more details see the author's *Catholic Imperialism and World Freedom* and *Catholic Imperialism in the 20th Century.*

(2) For more details see the author's *Vatican-Washington-Moscow Alliance*, Pub. Chick Publications.

(3) Idem.

Chapter Thirty-seven

President Carter orders the CIA to brief His Holiness. CIA's watch on John Paul II. His personal foibles and naivete. Refuses to sack Cody and Marcinkus. The Vatican-USA plans for the launching of Solidarity in Poland. The worries of Secretary of State Villot. Villot's sudden death.

After a few weeks of the new pontificate, the USA's inner cabinet became satisfied that "their Pope" was an innocent abroad. His ignorance of international affairs was considered his main asset. His total lack of diplomatic experience another. A third was that John Paul II thought of the Vatican as a larger Cracow, and of its problems, as a magnification of those of a small provencial Polish town. This suited the National Security Council, to perfection.

President Carter had been briefed about all this by the intelligence triumvirate, the CIA, the National Security Council and by the political section of the Pentagon. They all agreed that the all-clear should be given to John Paul II.

The CIA became, overnight, the official channel via which the USA briefed the Pope, by-passing Congress, Senate and Constitution. President Carter by-passed all four, by becoming personally involved in the venture. He did this by charging none other than his own mother to give delicate information to the Pope. The trick was carried out when Miss Lillian Carter, the President's mother, was received in private audience with the Pope. While there, she slipped a personal letter to John Paul II, written by her son, the President.

The sneakiness of the operation had been typically appropriate, for the CIA knew everything which there had been to know about the new Pope. Every detail, of what he did, or said, or even of what he intended to do, was noted and carefully indexed, for future reference.

In addition to all the names of Polish visitors, whom he was receiving in "secret" from Communist Poland, and who briefed him of their operations there, plus the briefs of the Polish clergy, and their links with the CIA, the USA's intelligence had noticed that the new Pope had dismissed all the nuns who had remained after the death of his predecessor, and had surrounded himself with young, good-looking ones from Poland. One, as already mentioned, about 30 years old, had become his favourite.

Also, that John Paul had spent an inordinate amount of time watching football. In fact, that he had even postponed saying mass to watch a famous international match. Also, how one of his priorities had been concerned with a swimming pool. Also how he wanted a tennis court. Also how he had ordered a famous Polish tennis champion to give him instruction in tennis. Also how he had started to jog, and also how Wojtyla had suffered from leukemia and had had several blood transfusions. Hence, perhaps, his interest in physical exercise.

They knew also what Count Julius Sokolnicki, President of the Republic of Poland, in exile, a friend of the present author, knew concerning some of Wojtyla's peculiar credences. One of these, the Count had told the present author (the Count had known Wojtyla for more than 30 years) was that Wojtyla while still a young bishop had gone to see an Italian mystic, called Padre Pio. Why? Because Padre Pio could predict the future.

Padre Pio told Wojtyla that he, Wojtyla, one day would become Pope. Pio, however, had added that his reign could not be a long one, and that because of it he should do as much as he could for the Church. Bishop Wojtyla, it seemed, took the prophecy of the mystic seriously, and even referred to it when eventually he was shot. The fact that he became Pope, and that someone attempted to terminate his papacy, so soon afterwards, thus confirming Padre Pio's predictions, made an indelible impression on John Paul.

The belief about Padre Pio's predictions remained with John Paul all his life. Hence, according to Count Sokolnicki, John Paul's frantic peregrinations all over the world, and his inability, or perhaps fear, to remain inside the Vatican for long periods.

Count Sokolnicki revealed this to the author at a religious

function in London. It was confirmed by another friend of the author, Marquis Dr. Carlo de Flavigny, Grand Master of the Knights of Malta.

The revelations were discussed that same evening, during an investiture, followed by a banquet for the knights, during which gold linked cufflinks were presented to the Grand Master, sent personally by President Reagan.(1)

Whether John Paul had changed his mind about the prediction of Padre Pio, or not, it has never been disclosed. The fact, however, of his continuous travelling seems to indicate that he had not.

Another no less interesting peculiarity of the Pope, which was also considered, was his almost erotic obsession with the Madonna. It was said that this was a special Polish affection. Pope Wojtyla, however, had brought the Madonna veneration to extreme. His first priority whenever he visits a country was to kneel before the image of the national or local Madonna. The psychological implications, while having no political significance, nevertheless, could tell a tale about his character.

While the above are of no serious political interest, what fascinated the CIA, however, was that Pope Wojtyla had begun to don a tracksuit and to trot around the Vatican gardens. And even more interesting that he did this with a regular companion, Archbishop Marcinkus, of the Vatican Bank. The two became inseparable, chatting during their exercises, in a kind of vernacular Polish Lithuanian dialect, as intimate pals might do. Marcinkus' family came from Lithuania. The CIA was much interested in the latter account, since the Vatican Bank had been involved in shady transactions with one of God's bankers, Sindona, later to be jailed by the USA. Also with his pupil Calvi, of the Catholic Ambrosiano Bank of Milan. The Calvi-Marcinkus team "were to volunteer" for the illegal supply of millions of dollars, for the forthcoming Solidarity operation, which had been planned to be launched after the Pope had visited Poland, in the Spring of 1979.

But more than such un-papal peccadillos—including the Pope swimming in the nude, and the Vatican having to pay a large sum to the hidden photographer to buy the picture, to avoid a scandal—the CIA had been interested in the swift cooling of his rela-

tionship with one of the main plotters, Cardinal Villot.

Also of the Pope's personal reassurance to Cardinal Cody that he, Cody, would not be dismissed from his Chicago See.

It had been rumoured, although without any positive proof, that the CIA had blackmailed Cody, in acting for them in sundry venturous intelligence escapades. The hold which the CIA plus the FBI had on Cody was formidable.

Both agencies could have exposed Cody, at any time they had wished to. Cody, however, had his own on them. As a veteran of three conclaves, he had become one of the major assets for the intelligence machinery. That is, he was key factor in Vatican watching. He had proved that during the last conclave, which had ended with the triumphal victory of the Wojtyla election.

But if Cody had become an asset to the USA intelligence, he had become something no less invaluable to the new Pope. It was obvious that the role he had played during that conclave had produced a secret bond between the two, for Wojtyla had become inexplicably reluctant to consider Cody's case.

The incriminating documents, accumulated in the Vatican against Cody, plus those supplied by the CIA and the FBI, were "neglected" by John Paul II. Indeed, they were put aside. And then it became obvious that the Pope did not wish to consider them, or even to look at them.

Various Cardinals advised him to deal with the damning evidence against Cody. The case was urgent, and the possibility of a damaging scandal, erupting in the USA and in the Vatican itself, imminent. Pope Wojtyla had dismissed such a demand without giving a single explanation.

The mystery, of course, had not been difficult to unravel. Cody had helped the new Pope to the papacy.

But if Cody had become immune from prosecution and from dismissal, another no less interesting case had been that of the Director of the Vatican Bank, Archbishop Marcinkus.

Various Cardinals, headed by Benelli, had urged John Paul II to study the dossier dealing with Marcinkus. Pope Wojtyla had summoned Marcinkus on the first of December 1978. The two men had remained secreted together for several hours. Alone. They had perused the dossier which Benelli and Felici had given

to the Pope.

After the Wojtyla-Marcinkus secret meeting, no more mentions were made of the Marcinkus dossier. The Pope refused even to discuss it. Indeed, he made it clear that he was not interested. And, in fact, that the dossier should be forgotten.

Pope Wojtyla, far from sacking the Chicago-born Archbishop, instead, started to jog daily with him in the Vatican gardens. The CIA knew all this, and knew all this because it knew even more than anybody else. The Vatican Bank was going to be heavily involved in the syphoning of millions of dollars to Solidarity, which was about to surge to the fore a few months later, in Communist Poland.

The new style of pontificate began to worry more than one of the plotters, who had helped to propel Wojtyla to power. The former Carmelengo felt that his job, as Secretary of State, was imperilled by Msgr. Casaroli, the diplomatic expert of Paul VI.

Casaroli was an able left-wing prelate who had counselled Paul VI in his pro-Russian policies. The Grand Master of the Knights of Malta had known him well, since Casaroli had been the Vatican's representative in Malta for many years, prior to his transference to the Vatican. Villot was right. Since Casaroli eventually was to guide Wojtyla, along an ambiguous East-West relations, to the suspicious considerations of the USA.

Villot seemed to become increasingly gloomy, and smoked more heavily than ever. His sixty cigarettes per day reached eighty. The suspicions he had carried with him, about his "inexplicable" behaviour after the death of John Paul I, appeared to have affected his personal demeanour. When people looked him in the eyes, he guessed what they were thinking about the whole affair.

But, even more than that, he seemed to have become concerned about the Wojtyla-CIA immediate plans for the Church-USA subversion in Poland. He knew the danger, having not forgotten Cardinal Mindzenty, and the bloody suppression of a previous similar Vatican-USA venture in Hungary.

He expressed his doubts to a few confidants about the wisdom of involving the Church, in what was afoot. A very unwise indiscretion, since he should have known how both the KGB

and the CIA had ears in the most recondite corners of the Vatican.

Villot, as well as Benelli, feared that the new Vatican-USA venture might entail a war between the superpowers, since the birth of Solidarity was only a first step to a wider USA plan, the destabilization of part of Russia itself.

The trigger of this second part of the Solidarity venture was the Ukraine. The proximity of the Ukraine to Catholic Poland, with its coupling of nationalism and religion, was a guarantee of direct Vatican-USA involvement into Russia itself. This since the 45 million Ukranians comprised not only the Soviet Union's largest non-Russian nationality, but were also largely Catholics.

At home Villot was uneasy with the Vatican Bank and its fraudulently gained millions. A scandal might break out, which could rock the Vatican, and indirectly the USA, with their current plan for Poland, in the coming spring of 1979.

What seemed to worry Villot most, however, was the unspoken accusation that he might have had something to do with the death of Pope Luciani. No one dared to accuse him. Yet the general silent consensus was that he had participated with the venture; not alone, to be sure, but with those who had planned the Pope's "poisoning."

The unspoken verdict of his suspected guilt, had struck not only with the Roman populace, but also with top people. His plotting, with either the KGB or the CIA, was taken for granted.

Villot felt, rightly or wrongly, that the focus of watchfullness, about the secrets he knew, on the part of the intelligence vigilantes, had intensified instead of diminished.

His potential revelations could have endangered the USA-Vatican secret grand alliance. The obvious beneficiary of any of his disclosures: the Soviet Union.

In other words, Villot had come to the conclusion that he had become the keeper of too many potentially dangerous top secrets. The Vatican, the CIA plus the KGB were all intensely interested in him. Or what he would do. Or what he would say. When, where and to whom.

The "suspicious" demise of a close friend of Pope Wojtyla, Bishop Andre Deskur, a man who had been personally involved in

secret deals between Cardinal Benelli and Cardinal Wojtyla, did nothing to assuage Villot's increasing anxiety about his future.

Had Bishop Deskur's been a "natural" death, or had it been an "accelerated" one? No one knew. The only thing that Villot knew for sure was that the CIA and the KGB had reached a perfectionism to defy belief, in their subtle art of producing "induced demises" to look like natural demises, and suspicious accidents to seem like true accidents.

Villot, although visibly aggrieved about something, continued to discharge his duties as Secretary of State. He followed the febrile Vatican-USA preparation for their joint subversive venture in Poland with personal detachment, but also with mounting apprehension.

While all this was going on, rumours had it that he and Benelli had met in secret on more than one occasion. The rumours were never substantiated. But, if true, they had indicated that a secret Benelli-Villot Âlliance had been in the making. The potential alliance of Villot-Benelli would have been full of incognita and, therefore, full of potential dangers for the new pontificate.

Then, in the spring of 1979, shortly before John Paul went to Poland, Cardinal Villot became suddenly ill. Then, within days, to the stupefaction of foes and friends alike, he died.

Perhaps, like Bishop Deskur, he knew too much.

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(1) The two ceremonies, the first in the Carmelite Church and the second in the Royal Garden Hotel, Kensington, London, took place 19th March 1983.

Chapter Thirty-eight

The KGB and the CIA make ready. The CIA discards old policies and adopts new ones. Solidarity, the new Marxist-Catholic creature of the CIA is launched by Pope Wojtyla. Devastating results. The KGB prepares for counter-action. The Vatican anti-Marxist operations in Central America. Bullets in St. Peter's Square, Rome.

Thanks to the USA sponsored new pontificate, the Vatican had become a docile instrument of the USA grand strategies, in Europe and in Latin America.

All the cloak and dagger inbroglios which had culminated with the "providential" if somewhat "suspicious" demise of the previous Pope, had paid dividends, beyond the imagination. Even the National Security Council and the "inner-inner" plotters, with a foot in the intelligence apparati of the presidential cabinet, had marvelled at their success.

The Catholic Polish counsellor of President Carter was agog, as were all his friends, eager to set in motion the grand plan, which they had resurrected since the Carter administration had come to the fore; namely, the renewal of the anti-Russian, anti-Marxist assertiveness of the USA in both regions.

The novel USA grand strategy was psychologically inspired. The old policy of quasi-military subversion, which the USA had adopted, since the end of the second World War, was discarded.

The USA's intelligence machinery, then, had played with the antiquated idea of setting up old fashioned kingdoms and empires. In Hungary for instance, as already mentioned, they had resurrected the dream of planting the old Austrian Hungarian empire. "Emperor" Otto of Hapsburg, had been nursed, trained, paid and pampered by the USA, for years with the precise objective of recreating a new Catholic kingdom, under the umbrella

of the USA, in central Europe.

Its principal plotter had been another USA "puppet," Cardinal Mindzenty. He and Emperor Otto managed to engineer a kind of operetta revolution, partially planned by the CIA, with the precise objective of overthrowing the Hungarian Government.

Cardinal Mindzenty declared himself the new Prime Minister, Otto his new Catholic Emperor. The two plotters formed their "cabinet" and waited for their revolution. The KGB, however, which had closely followed their machinations, counteracted the CIA with a timely crushing blow.

The top KGB executive, Yuri Andropov, then officially the Russian Ambassador in Budapest, but in actual fact, the head of the Russian intelligence apparatus, and later, in 1983, Russian Premier, crushed the USA-Cardinal-Hapsburg revolution, by sending Russian tanks in the streets. Blood was spilt, arrests made, and the CIA's Mindzenty adventure ended in disaster.

Cardinal Mindzenty, as already seen, took refuge in the American Embassy in Budapest, while Emperor Otto escaped to the USA. The State Department, which had already made ready to give the crown of the old Austrian Hungarian Emperors to him, (the crown had been in the possession of the USA since the end of World War II) decided to prepare for a new "coup." This never occurred.(1)

And since the whole project proved to be a fiasco, with no hope of repetition, the USA finally decided to return the crown to Hungary,one of the minor political triumphs of President Carter.

In the Vatican, meanwhile, Pope Paul VI had followed the CIA Hungarian adventure with open disapproval, indeed hostility. The USA blamed him, even if partially, for the CIA-Mindzenty-Otto fiasco.

The lesson had been a bitter one. The Vatican with a pro-Russian Pope, was a serious obstacle for any USA sponsored Eastern Europe uprising. New plans for future revolutions were discarded as long as Paul VI was alive.

While waiting for Paul to die, the USA conceived an entirely new strategy. This was simplicity itself.

Instead of attempting to substitute the Marxist regimes,

with old fashioned monarchies, buttressed by native reactionary Cardinals, the USA now adopted the more subtle policy, that of using a thief to catch a thief.

Converted into ideological terms, that meant that the CIA now set to mobilize a restless nationalistic proletariat, against the ponderous inflexible Marxist monoliths, controlled by the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

The Church, however, from now on, would have had to play her role, no longer via the local hierarchy, but via the intelligence ecclesiastic political engineering of the Vatican itself.

That required the removal of a pro-Russian Pope, and his replacement with an anti-Russian and thus a pro-American pontif. The policy became an urgent one, in view of the menacing Russian stance. The USA became impatient, and tried to force the pace. Hence the CIA's launching of its campaign against Paul VI. Hence the CIA's call for his "resignation." Paul VI was too slow to die. He should be forced to resign.

More than one Pope had resigned, in the past. Indeed, had been "removed" to make way for some forcible successor. Very often, with the cooperation of the paramount secular power of his times.

A "providential demise" of a "wrong Pope" therefore, would have been not so unusual. Indeed, it would have become a "necessity." Hence the wrong Pope, that is, the innocent Pope Luciani of Venice, having died so silently with no witnesses, unlike the Archbishop of Leningrad, who had dropped at his feet, for drinking a poisoned cup of coffee, which had obviously been meant for John Paul I.

The operation had been mismanaged, by Cardinal Villot, who obviously knew nothing about the technique of a neatly "induced demise."

When, therefore, the operators of the election of the "right" Pope, had achieved their objective, they set immediately to work. Their elaborate machinery for the coordination of subversion in Eastern Europe, was set in motion. Their "ideal" Pope, that is, anti-Russian Polish Wojtyla, was told to make ready.

The CIA, National Security Agency, and others, including rebellious Catholic workers, and key Catholic prelates, who had

formed the backbone, were briefed, that the new USA-Vatican child, was about to be born. His name—Solidarity.

Pope Wojtyla, who had given his blessing, plus millions of dollars, to its creation, was told, by the USA, that if Solidarity had been conceived by the USA, it had to be given birth by the Catholic Church, or rather by the Vatican. Pope John Paul, in short, had to act as Solidarity's midwife.

The new Pope's champagne celebration, immediately after his election, had not yet been over, than the CIA had already set in motion its vast underground machinery throughout Poland. The CIA's network, which had been integrated with that of the Catholic Church, and nationalistic cells, now formed a cohesive para-military, ecclesiastic intelligence apparatus, ready to go into action, at the first opportune moment.

The high command in Washington planned the grand strategy of the local battalions, linked with workers' committees, and the pulpits in the churches. The Vatican was told to mobilize religious nationalistic fervour at its maximus, to coincide with the projected visit of the Polish Pope to Communist Poland.

Within a few months, the whole operation was ready. Solidarity had been born, fully armed, like the Goddess Minerva, from the brain of the CIA and emotive nationalism of the new Polish Pope.

John Paul II visited Poland, with the stance of a monarch of old, brandishing the cross, instead of the sword. During his stay, religious emotionalism and Polish nationalism amalgamated into a dangerous animosity, and pro-Western longing. Solidarity emerged like a rising sun in the eastern horizon.

Its emergence, shortly after John Paul's departure, took the West by surprise. The Polish church became, overnight, a vast anti-regime bulldozer. Priests supported Solidarity from their pulpits. The government was mocked. Solidarity's popularity grew by the hour.

Church and trade unions talked openly about overthrowing the Polish government, by force. Solidarity leaders went to Rome "for advice," which they got from the Pope himself. The CIA did the rest. At the same time, the National Security Council prepared for the extension of their political strategies. Military

emergency plans were made available.

The West, at large, supported the adventure. There were talks about the "spontaneous" worker-Catholic revolution spreading into neighbouring countries. In Czechoslovakia, the Catholic Church was mobilized. In Hungary, the old Catholic battalions made ready. Also in Romania. Indeed, even in Bulgaria.

In the USA, politicians commented that the Eastern block, at last, would be liberated from the Russian tyranny. Russia at first said nothing; then, realizing the seriousness of the USA-Vatican exertions, prepared for a "preliminary" military intervention in Poland.

The CIA did not respond. Or rather it responded, via the Polish Pope. Wojtyla counterthreatened to go to Poland, to stop single handed, any forthcoming Russian invasion. He was ready to sacrifice his own life, he promised, led by his favourite Madonna, the traditional head of the Polish armies.

The papal bravado, shocked many Catholics. Solidarity had become a trigger for a potential USA Soviet military confrontation. It was not forgotten, by many, that the second World War had been initiated by Polish intransigence.

Polish romantic rodomontades were legendary, and the perennial cause of endless tragedies, for the Poles themselves, no less than for their neighbours.

Pope Wojtyla's challenge, having been one of them, had indicated where his rash challenge to the Kremlin might lead the Polish nation, in a confrontation between the USA and Russia.

The USA State Department became apprehensive and told the Pope to refrain from such verbal bravados. Also to use caution, or rather, to follow "instructions" and no longer to make any "pronouncements" without "consultations" with his USA mentors.

Soviet Russia, in the meanwhile, had taken concrete steps, for a military "confrontation." The Ukraine, with its 45 millions, separate ethnic block, and its millions of Catholics, could not be disturbed, by the threatened USA-Vatican mobilization against Eastern Europe.

Andropov, the former head of the KGB, saw to it that it did not. As an expert veteran of the CIA's plots, in Hungary and

Czecoslovakia, he knew how serious the USA-Vatican current machinations could, and might, be.

During the unfolding of the USA-Mindzenty plot, he had won, not so much because of his sending Soviet tanks into Budapest, but also, because the Vatican itself had side-stepped both the Hungarian and the American Catholic plotters.

In the case of Solidarity, however, Andropov, had realized, that the combined USA-Vatican venture was a far more dangerous operation, than any of the past. This was due, chiefly to the fact, that the Vatican now was fully behind the CIA, and that behind the CIA, there stood the combined machinery of the National Security Agency and of the State Department. And behind these, the strategic contingents of the USA armed forces.

Although it was true that the Polish Pope was a mere instrument of the USA's campaign against Russian hegemony in Eastern Europe, nevertheless, it was no less true, that in Wojtyla the USA had a man who could mobilize millions of Catholics in the Eastern block. Indeed, even inside the Soviet Union herself.

Because of all that, the peril of a USA-Soviet military confrontation had become real, concrete and menacing.

The USA-Vatican machinations, against the stability of Communist Eastern Europe, had assumed a true dramatic dimension, thanks chiefly to the fact that the CIA had had at its disposal a willing, cooperative Polish Pope.

The importance of the triumph of the CIA's coup in electing John Paul II, had never been so appreciated until then. As had been the significance of the "providential demise" of the Venetian Pope. The "disappearance" of John Paul I had been a "necessity." Without it, the prosecution of the CIA-Vatican policies, in Eastern Europe, would have been impossible. The conclusion became accepted by most political observers, including the most naive.

In Moscow, although the sudden death of John Paul I at first had been judged a limited calamity, now the true significance of his "demise" was brought to the fore, with a bang, when the USA-Vatican plot produced Solidarity.

The papacy, with the new Pope, had been turned into a most

effective instrument, for carrying out a USA internal and external disestablishment of the whole of Eastern Europe. A pro-American Pope, by having transformed the Vatican into an anti-Russian global instrument, now was made to endanger not only the long range Soviet Marxist ideological expansionism of Russia in Europe, but also in Central and South America. The new Pope, after having been presssed by his American mentors, in fact, had immediately condemned Liberation Theology there. He had begun by castigating the Jesuits, the principal inspirers, of many guerrillas, most of which were commanded by radical priests, armed with Russian weapons, and advised by Russian instructors and advisors.

The joint Vatican-USA operations had begun to seriously endanger the long range strategies of Soviet Russia, both in Europe and in the Western hemisphere. The potential transformation of Central and indeed of South America, into a Russian Soviet protectorate, had become imperilled, by the new reality; namely by the fact that the vast machinery of the Vatican, and thus of the Catholic Church, had become subservient, to a subservient Pope. But even more dangerous, they both had become the subservient instruments of American imperialism.

The problem for an anxious Soviet Russia had become not only paramount, but also pressing. Something had to be done, before it was too late. The KGB, or rather, Yuri Andropov, the former head, and his other Soviet policy formulators, decided upon a drastic operation.

If the papacy of Pope Luciani had been terminated, as it had, to suit the political convenience of a superpower, like the USA, why not do the same, and terminate the papacy of Pope Wojtyla, without waiting for a natural "demise?"

The risk, in view of the damage which such a papacy had already done, was worth the attempt. The "motto" the end justifies the means, had not been exclusive to the Jesuits. It had been the supermotto of both the CIA and the KGB, the twin creatures, working in opposite camps.

And so it came to pass, that one sunny day in 1981, as Pope John Paul II was blessing the crowds in St. Peter's Square, Rome, gun shots were heard. After he had been hit, Pope Wojtyla, was

heard to murmur, "Why did they do it?" His naivete had been that great.[2]

The question was repeated at once, by millions, all over the world. At the CIA and at the KGB headquarters, however, the comment had been, "Why has it not happened before?"

The attempt had been the latest intelligence exercise of a rival superpower, which had decided to act with the utmost ruthlessness, to tip the balance in its favour.

The objective of the activities of the USA and Russia had been the elimination of two pontiffs who had opposed their respective interests.

Thus, while Pope John Paul I, the herald of a seemingly non-political pontificate, died of a "sudden and unexplained death," presumably by poison, 33 days after his elevation, his successor John Paul II, the initiator of an uncharted ideological campaign, directed by the USA, was gunned down by the other superpower that he had set himself to oppose.

John Paul II eventually recovered and resumed his round of activities, more zealously than ever, in the service of the USA-Vatican Alliance.

The lethal drug used in the "liquidation" of the first Pope, like the bullets fired against the second, was but the tip of the iceberg, beneath which the hostile religious-political countercurrents had been operating within the secretive walls of the Vatican.

The KGB and the CIA had calibrated a mutual quid pro quo of terror, at last.

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(1) For more details about Cardinal Mindzenty, Otto, and the CIA and the Hungarian crown, see the author's *Vatican Imperialism in the 20th Century*, Zondervan, Michigan.

(2) The would be assassin, a Turkish gunman, Mehmet Ali Agca. His true sponsors were never discovered. It was suspected he had operated for the Russians, via the Bulgarian connection. Jailed for life in Rome. A few weeks before, the 30th March, President Reagan also had been shot and badly wounded.

Chapter Thirty-nine

What prompted the Pope's attempted assassination? The vigorous persistency of the KGB. Potential danger of the KGB's papal candidate. Integration and working of the Catholic and American intelligence network. The KGB and the CIA long range operational planning. The Trotsky murder and Stalin.

The attempt to assassinate John Paul II had failed. After a few months, and thanks to the nine top surgeons, the Pope had become his own vigorous self, as before.

The KGB's fiasco had been even more dramatically a failure than popularly assessed, beginning from the world media, whose short sighted speculations bordered from political infantilism to ridiculousness.

The motivation behind the attempt had been the determination of the KGB to reach with a single shot, a simultaneous double objective: a) the overdue elimination of an anti-Russian Pope, and b) the potential election of a pro-Russian one.

The latter, although nullified by the failure of the elimination of the first, nevertheless, had still a potentiality of a future realization. The potentiality existed, as long as the KGB papal candidate was still alive and well. Cardinal Benelli, the man who had lost to Wojtyla, by the unbelievable loss of only five votes, although relegated to the background, had been anything but a spent force. His mentors in the Kremlin and in Rome, although thwarted in their hope, were still hopeful for a pontifical future.

The more so, since following the aftermath of the KGB's fiasco, Wojtyla meanwhile, had become the most "domesticated and tamed" USA Pope, in recorded history. After the attempt, his personal standing with the top political Catholic luminaries of the Administration, beginning with the military, and with Presi-

dent Reagan himself, was cemented indelibly with the policies of the USA itself.

The USA's progress of Pope Wojtyla, and his integration within the American grand strategy, embittered the KGB more even than before. The double failure of manipulating Benelli as a Pope, and their failure of eliminating Pope Wojtyla with a bullet, had not so much minimized the efficiency of the KGB as an effective intelligence apparatus, but, more seriously, it had damaged the strategic ideological war of the Russian regime itself, with enormous political consequences.

Officially the Kremlin had pretended indifference. In reality, however, it had assessed the reverse with the utmost gravity. The accusation that the attempt had been engineered by the KGB was never established. The evidence in the hands of the CIA and the National Security Agencies, however, proved otherwise.

No matter which way the attempt had been, the harsh fact remained that the Russian intelligence had been soundly beaten, whereas the American one had assured a smashing triumph for their administration.

In pragmatic political terms, the CIA victory had produced the transformation of the Vatican into a political satellite of the global grand strategy of the USA.

But if the CIA and its associates had successfully beaten the KGB twice, first inside the Conclave, and then in St. Peter's Square, the CIA had not forgotten that the KGB was not by any means reduced to impotence. It had remained as active as ever, if not more so.

The KGB's main long range objective had remained paramount: the elimination of the pro-American Pope, and his substitution with a pro-Russian one.

The focus of such candidacy was Cardinal Benelli. As the KGB's potential papal candidate, Benelli became the special target for surveillance of the CIA and other security departments of the USA. Every move, declaration and word of his was monitored, assessed and interpreted with the utmost care, both in Rome and in Washington D.C.

Benelli, who had accepted his defeat by Wojtyla, with dignity and without apparent resentment, nevertheless, had not for-

gotten Wojtyla's secret mentors. He knew very well that some of the main CIA creatures were still at work within the inner chambers of the Vatican. He believed that one of these was Cardinal Cody.

The files of Cardinal Cody were enormous and damning. Yet all the attempts at removing him, under three pontificates, had been in vain. Paul VI made a decision to sack him, weeks before he died. John Paul I, after examining the files, decided to remove him at once, and had his "heart attack," the next morning. There had been something curiously resilient about Cody's invulnerability.

Benelli, as a former Secretary of State, knew the secrets of the Vatican intelligence, and, hence, its connections with the CIA via the high hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Cody, it had been rumoured, had been a protege of the FBI and of the CIA for years. That was nothing new, since it is well know that most Catholic prelates in the USA are equated by the two agencies, as top officials in the fields of their informative intelligence. Some of the prelates have volunteered their cooperation. Others supply their intelligence without even realizing the roles they are made to play.

The vast intelligence network of the federal agencies, conpenetrates with those of most churches.

The most cooperative and the most integrated of them is that of the Catholic Church. The financial, political and administrative influence of the USA Cardinals, for instance, make of them the veritable ecclesiastic, and political gaulitiers, of their dioceses; on a par with governors, congressmen and even senators, in the political field.

In the eyes of the FBI, and above all of the CIA, at times they can be considered even more useful to the local or federal administration, than professional politicians or even intelligence agents.

In the international area, they are foci of gathering of information of the utmost value, since a Cardinal or Bishop has, at his disposal, the vast intelligence network of the Catholic administration, not only in his region, but also in the regions of

his colleagues in other nations.

A parish priest, a Bishop or a Cardinal, is the collector of continuous, almost daily news of all kinds. A reliable suplier of secret information. Hence the necessity for the FBI or the CIA to be on the best terms with them.

In the global scale, the USA intelligence network has been almost amalgamated with that of the Vatican.

The KGB cannot even compete with the combination of the two, even though the global network of the KGB, of course, is most efficient, where left-wing communities, are paramount, or in the majorities. Even so, the efficiency of the ideological intelligence gatherers of the KGB cannot be compared with those of the Catholic Church, since its quasi-amalgamation with that of the USA. Cardinal Cody, it was said, had been one of the pillars of the USA-Catholic intelligence fraternity. Hence the impossibility of having him removed from the American hierarchy or from the Vatican. Indeed, hence the impossibility of having him indicted, and even brought to task, altogether.

His immunity, Benelli thought, had derived from the secret protections, which he enjoyed in the highest echelons of the USA intelligence.

When John Paul I became Pope, Cardinal Benelli saw the first opportunity to have Cody removed. He failed, because of the Pope's premature death.

With the election of Wojtyla, Benelli tried once more, although with less optimism. He knew too well the part which Cody had played in the election of Wojtyla himself. In view of this, having prepared his formidable dossier against Cody, he approached John Paul II, pleading for Cody's removal.

Benelli's advocacy was strengthened by that of Cardinal Baggio, who had also been investigating Cody, since the time of Paul VI. The two made an irresistible team, and hoped for success.

After having confronted Pope Wojtyla with their dossiers, John Paul hardly glanced at the damning evidence contained in them and told them that the Cody case had already been closed. As simply as that.

Benelli, although disappointed, had not been surprised at the

abruptness of Wojtyla. John Paul had a debt to pay to Cody. It was an obligation which he could not avoid. The recent plots had created a brotherhood, whose bonds had become unbreakable.

But if the Cody case had been important, Benelli had been concerned with an even more pressing task; the exposure of an immense clandestine Mafia, which had been operating for years, within and outside the Vatican itself. This had spiralled round the IOR, that is, round the Vatican Bank itself.

There again, as soon as Pope Luciani had been elected, Benelli had counselled a willing Pope to begin the investigations into the financial imbroglio of the Bank.

John Paul I had accepted Benelli's counsel, since, as Patriarch of Venice, as we have already mentioned, he had been robbed of his Catholic Bank of Venice, by the Vatican Bank.

The death of Pope Luciani had stopped the process. Now, it was time that the plotters be exposed, and removed, to save the Holy See from an unprecedented scandal.

Benelli's endeavours irked the Polish Pope, who became increasingly irritated. The evidence against Archbishop Marcinkus, like with Cody, was overwhelming. Benelli insisted that the man should be investigated; but once more, like with Cody, John Paul refused to listen. Indeed, he went so far as to order Benelli to stop his operations altogether.

By now it had become more than obvious that, in addition to the personal hostility of Pope Wojtyla, other interested parties had been at work.

Benelli's investigations might have trespassed into even more clandestine fields; that is, into the operational activities of national and international agencies, behind which there stood certain powers, beginning with the USA itself.

The Vatican, as a co-partner of the USA, was as compromised as the latter; hence the Pope's reluctance to the Benelli's efforts. The Vatican-USA web was intertwined with vast financial sums, and conspiratorial schemes, in Eastern Europe.

The instruments for conducting such policies, were the CIA for the USA, and the Polish Church in Poland for the Vatican. The third important party, which had been heavily co-involved, had

been none other than the Pope himself. The result of their clandestine activities had been Solidarity.

The new Pope, rumours had it, had been involved in the secret and illegal supply of millions of dollars to the Catholic plotters. These had come from the Vatican Bank, and its associates, the proteges of the CIA; and even more important, had come to be regarded by the National Security Council as the necessary instruments for the Vatican-USA adventure in Poland.

When Cardinal Benelli's relentless efforts at exposing the Vatican Bank's illegal operations, had commenced, therefore, it became obvious that the Cardinal had started to pit himself against something more serious than a mere internal Vatican scandal.

He had begun to wage open warfare against clandestine operations promoted by the top intelligence agencies of the USA herself.

Because of this, his game became increasingly dangerous. From a purely ecclesiastic imbroglio, seemingly concerned only with the Vatican Bank, and a group of international crooks, he had trespassed into a field, where he had been investigating the secretive activities of the USA intelligence.

His persistence had become even more perilous, because of his having been considered a potential creature of the KGB. To the CIA, Benelli, in fact, was a potential pro-Russian Pope. Suppose Wojtyla's reign was terminated, with another bullet, poison, or even a natural death? As long as Benelli lived, he would have remained a most serious danger to the USA.

He had proved that, within a few weeks of the reign of Pope John Paul I; whereas John Paul I, had approved the total disclosure of the mystery of Cody, John Paul II, now had forbidden it. Why?

The KGB had given an obvious answer: their 1981 assassination attempt. The surprise had been that the KGB's attempt had not come earlier.

The CIA and the KGB take long range promotional plans for the execution of some of their political objectives. Since its formation, the CIA has done so; like for instance, its organized coup in 1954 in Guatemala, when they installed a pro-USA military junta

in power, or protected the Somoza dictatorship, or, organized the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, not to mention many others in various parts of the world. The KGB is no less active.

One of the most striking examples, as already mentioned, was when Stalin's great rival, Leon Trotsky, escaped from Russia. In 1940 a lone assassin killed Trotsky.

In 1978, almost 30 years later, the assassin, one Ramon Mercader, died in Havana, Cuba. His death was announced by Moscow.

Mercader, who had spent 20 years in a Mexican jail, for the murder of Trotsky, had claimed that he had acted alone.

Yet, it was discovered that Stalin, as soon as Trotsky had been murdered, had received Mercader's mother, in the Kremlin, and had decorated her, in lieu of her son.

The reality, of course, had been that the assassination had been a long ranged KGB operation. The CIA has acted likewise in many similar cases. It could not be otherwise, since the two hostile agencies, although deadly rivals, are committed to carry out all kinds of intrigues, bloody plots and crimes, in the name of the aggressive policies of their respective countries.

Chapter Forty

The Pope's secret letter to the Kremlin. His threat to resign. The plotter who cannot be sacked. His mysterious bonds with Pope Wojtyla. The Vatican Bank's road to disaster. The papal 2 billion dollars. A banker's dramatic warning.

Sometime during the summer of 1980, Pope John Paul II wrote a personal handwritten letter to Brezhnev, President of the Soviet Union.

The Pope told Brezhnev, how he knew that Russia was preparing to invade Poland, to stamp out Solidarity. Should that occur, the Pope warned Brezhnev, he, Wojtyla, would resign from the papacy, and go back to Poland as a simple priest, to fight against the Soviet occupation.

The handwritten letter, it was later claimed, dissuaded the Russian President from the projected invasion.

The gesture of Pope Wojtyla had been typical of the legendary Polish love for romantic rodomontade; as vainly foolish as that squadron of Polish cavalry which, after Hitler's armies had invaded Poland, at the beginning of the second World War, had charged a whole division of German heavy tanks, riding on their horses, with drawn sabres.

The Vatican denied the veracity of the letter, although the USA had a facsimile of the same, deposited in the secret archives of the CIA. It is believed that the Pope, himself, had permitted the leak, to encourage Solidarity supporters.(1)

The letter had been brought directly into the Kremlin by a trusted friend of Pope Wojtyla. At first it was thought it had been by his old mentor, Cardinal Koening. Then it was said it had been Casaroli, who had succeeded Cardinal Villot. Afterwards, it was rumoured that this very secret mission had been entrusted to Marcinkus, the President of the Vatican Bank.

The rumours were never substantiated. But their existence

had indicated the extraordinary link, which had kept together Pope Wojtyla with Marcinkus. Marcinkus, by any normal standards, should have been sacked from his job, if nothing else, because of the equivocal activities of the Vatican Bank, under his presidency.

Marcinkus' secret links with Pope Wojtyla, furthermore, had been enhanced by another, no less factual, connection. It had been rumoured, that he had supplied millions of dollars to Solidarity. Also that he had participated in all the intrigues necessary in conducting negotiations with the clandestine USA-Vatican network in Poland, which had fathered Solidarity.

In other words, the Pope had been so involved with the machinations within and outside the Vatican, in which Marcinkus had participated; to such an extent that it had become impossible for the Pope to get rid of the Chicago born Archbishop, without risking disclosures. The disclosures, it was feared, could have rocked the Vatican as well as the machinery of the USA intelligence, and thus their joint operations with the Catholic Church.

It was further suggested that Marcinkus knew all the operations, which had involved the manipulations of the Conclave, which had elected Wojtyla. Also of the response of President Brezhnev, to the papal letter, and about the Pope's having fathered Solidarity. Something which Soviet Russia had come to regard as a real danger to the stability of Eastern Europe.

It was rumoured that, after the letter had been delivered into the Kremlin, in August 1980, Russia had come to the conclusion that the new Pope had become a positive political menace. And that as a result, the Soviets had charged the KGB, or rather the top man with a foot both in the KGB and the Kremlin's leadership, that is, Yuri Andropov, Brezhnev's successor, to get rid of the turbulent Pope.

Andropov, it was said, decided to carry out the operation by proxy; hence the assassination attempt of the following year, 1981, and the accusations that Russia had used the Bulgarian intelligence to carry out the Pope's execution.

But if it had been true, that the secret links, between the Pope and Marcinkus, had been unbreakable, because of the secretive diplomatic and political intrigues in which they had both

operated, what was no less true, had been also the fact that Marcinkus had manipulated the wealth of the Vatican, in a manner, which traditional bankers, would call "disputable" or even "deliberately crooked."

The accusations were incontrovertile, verifiable. They were confirmed by the mysterious disappearance not of hundreds of millions, but of over a billion dollars; most of them via the Vatican Bank and its subsidiaries.

The scandalous imbroglio in which the Vatican had been enmeshed, became the talk of Europe and the USA. The imbroglio had been commenced by Pope Paul VI who had initially elevated Marcinkus from obscurity into Vatican prominence. It then became magnified by the open participation of two international financial buccaneers, one of whom, Sindona, was to be sentenced to 25 years imprisonment in a USA prison where he had been extradited. Sindona, whom Paul VI had also introduced to the Vatican, had brought his brightest disciple, Roberto Calvi, the Manager of the Ambrosiano of Milan, into a unique partnership with the Director of the Vatican Bank, Msgr. Marcinkus.

The obscure and fraudulent financial operations which they had conducted, for years, soon became incomprehensible, even to the most astute bankers, except for the financial partners, Calvi and Marcinkus.

The two created subsidiary, or "shell" banks, in various parts of the world, into which they deposited millions, with the Vatican Bank's approval, indeed, financial blessing.

Marcinkus became a director of one of these phoney banks, the Nassau Bank, which he visited twice in secret.

He participated with Calvi in the legal robbing of the Patriarch of Venice, later Pope John Paul I, of his Venetian Bank, which we have already mentioned; something which had induced John Paul I to plan to sack him. This event never occurred because of John Paul I's "sudden death."

Calvi eventually was arrested, imprisoned and then released on bail. The Bank of Italy asked the Vatican for an explanation about his associations with Marcinkus. The Vatican Bank remained silent.

Notwithstanding that, soon afterwards the Vatican Bank

was accused not only of having helped to set up the many phoney shell companies abroad, but also, of "owning" them. The Vatican denied the charge, with vigourous indignation.

Investigations were carried out. Calvi and his Banco Ambrosiano, where the shareholders had to show they had been baptized in the Catholic Church, were put under severe scrutiny. The disappearance of hundreds of millions of dollars, and their inaccountability, shook the financial banking world. Calvi sought help from the Vatican. Marcinkus, after having given Calvi compromising letters of patronage, refused any further aid.

The Calvi-Vatican Bank empire was about to collapse. The revelations of its financial, political and diplomatic intrigues would have been enormous. The scandal would have rocked not only several banks in Italy, and abroad, it would have implicated, also, the Vatican. Furthermore, the clandestine operations of John Paul II in Poland, would have become public. His coordinated plotting with the CIA would have created a political scandal.

The Vatican denied flatly any participation in the Calvi affairs. Its bank, it explained, was only a deposit bank, where religious bodies put their money, on trust.

It even asserted that it had only a minimum fund of a few million. The bank was a poor concern and could not be compared with any "secular" bank.

The denial was blasted by the annual report of the Bank for International Settlements based in Basle, Switzerland. Its official report, the most authoritative in the world, analyzes the financial position of banks in the ten largest nations of the world; also the foreign currency of "off shore banking centres," like those set up jointly by Calvi and the Vatican Bank in the Bahamas.

The report proved that, in 1977, the Vatican Bank had deposits of more than 100 million dollars.

Cardinals Benelli and Felici, who had been investigating the whole Calvi-Marcinkus spider's web for years, however, had reported to Pope Luciani, and then to Pope Wojtyla, that the Vatican Bank had an additional lump of at least between 600 and 700 million dollars, on deposit.

Benelli counselled Pope Wojtyla that the Vatican Bank be

"investigated" and its director, Marcinkus, be "suspended." Marcinkus' assurances that the Vatican Bank had nothing to do with the Ambrosiano's crooked operations, were not true. The more so, since Benelli had further discovered how the Vatican Bank had a total deposit, of foreign currency, close to one and a half billion dollars.

That, it should be noted, was in addition to the properties at home and abroad, estimated at above 2 billion.

As early as October 1978, Benelli had warned Pope Wojtyla that, unless something was done, the Vatican was heading towards an unprecedented scandal. Pope Wojtyla willfully ignored Benelli's warning, and rejected Benelli's pleas to sack Marcinkus before it was too late.

The path to disaster accelerated as Cardinal Benelli had predicted. Calvi's position became untenable.

Bankruptcy, and with it the total collapse of the Catholic Banco Ambrosiano, became inevitable.

Pressured by the Italian police, the Bank of Italy, and banks from abroad, Calvi asked the Vatican for help. He went to Rome to see Marcinkus and the Pope. The two refused. Calvi, in desperation, asked the Catholic equivalent of Freemasonry, the Opus Dei, to save him. The Opus Dei was told by the Vatican not to give any aid.

Calvi, decided to flee the country, to avoid arrest. Prior to his disappearance, however, he gave a warning: "I shall reveal things, which once known, will rock the Vatican. The Pope will have to resign."

While this was going on, one of the principal promoters of Cardinal Wojtyla to the papacy, believed to have been a protege of the CIA and of the FBI, that is Cardinal Cody of Chicago, died in April 1982.

Pope John Paul I had planned to sack him. Pope John Paul II decided the reverse. Thanks to his robustness, boisterousness and roughness, Cody could have felt at home in the Renaissance. He had all the qualities, intrigues and partisanships necessary for shady equivocal operations.

Contrary to the opinion of two previous Popes, as well as the opinion of many others, Pope Wojtyla had always refused to sack

him; as he had continued refusing to sack Marcinkus and several of his eccleaiastic and lay associates.

John Paul II went on scorning all warnings of impending disaster. Why? Could it have been that the links of the Vatican with a surreptitious band of financial crooks, intelligence operators, and international intrigues, had already sunk too deep to be uprooted, without provoking a dangerous commotion, in certain secretive quarters, within and outside the Vatican itself.

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(1) The story of the letter was never confirmed "officially," although its existence is beyond doubt. The US network NBC, made public its existence 21.9.1982)

Chapter Forty-one

God's Banker, hanged under a London Bridge. The swindle of the Vatican Bank. The puzzling link of Pope Wojtyla with the Bank's director. The financial grand fiasco of Wojtyla's Holy Year. The Bank and the CIA. Solidarity and the CIA-Wojtyla East-European revolution. The Kremlin and the turbulent priest. His attempted assassination. Rumours about the Pope and Marcinkus. Cardinal Benelli wants a clarification. He is warned of the danger. His unexpected sudden death. The great Wojtyla enigma remains unsolved.

Early one morning of June 1981, a man was found hanged under Blackfriar's Bridge, London, England. In his pockets, there was a passport, a visa for Brazil, and a list of names.

The police brought down the body, and then, having identified it, ended a nine day manhunt. Or so they thought. The affair had started in Italy, in connection with the man's sudden disappearance from Rome, where he had been due to appear before a court, following an appeal against a four year sentence.

Prior to his going to London the individual had sought to approach Archbishop Marcinkus. Also Pope Wojtyla.

His attempt having failed, he had gone to England to carry out his next move. The disclosure of a financial scandal, of enormous proportions, in which the Vatican Bank and the Pope had seemingly been involved.

The potentialities of such "disclosures" was bound to affect many prominent personalities who, until then, had dealt with enormous sums of money.

The day before his arrival in London, it was announced that his secretary, who had shared all his most intimate secrets, had "thrown" herself out of his office window. It was soon proved, however, that she had been mysteriously hurled out from the

fifth floor, by unknown persons, and instantly killed. An obvious timely murder.

The man's name, Roberto Calvi, nicknamed God's Banker, because of his financial activities with the Vatican, former President of the Banco Ambrosiano of Milan, Italy, and close partner of Archbishop Marcinkus, Director of the Vatican Bank.

The London police suspected murder. In July 1982, however, an official inquest declared that Calvi had "killed" himself.(1)

The verdict surprised all, except a few individuals, in London, Italy, the Vatican and Washington; since in the past, certain elements had operated on behalf of another God's Banker, Michele Sindona, another adviser of the Vatican Bank, and another friend of Marcinkus. Two years before, Sindona had been sentenced to 25 years in jail, after a New York trial, following the collapse of the Franklin National Bank.

After Calvi's suicide, Sindona was extradited to Italy in September 1984, and in June 1985 was accused of having arranged the killing of G. Ambrosoli, who had started to investigate Sindona's finances in 1979.(2)

Sindona had helped sundry shady Vatican transactions. These included one in which the USA herself had participated. In the fifties, the USA had given preferential treatment to the Vatican, in the purchase of gold bullion. The USA, it was alleged, had given "preferential" treatment to the Vatican, which had been allowed to buy the precious metal (of gold ingots) at 34 dollars per ounce, one dollar below the pegged rate of 35 dollars per ounce. (3)

In 1982, the Calvi verdict shocked even the City of London, which had been privy to several Vatican ambiguous deals, for decades.

The City considered the Calvi affair with misgiving. Since the death of Calvi spelt the emergence of a financial iceberg, under which was the greatest swindle of the century, Vatican and Pope were involved. Their involvement could have spelt the mobilization of financial forces, whose potentialities for mischief were difficult to calculate.

To avert the disaster, exercises like killing had to be accepted as probable. Indeed, as part of the complexities of the

Calvi-Marcinkus, Vatican Bank, Pope, imbroglio.

The danger was the most complex since, Calvi had promised that his revelations would "rock the Vatican, to its foundations." Indeed, "would have compelled Pope Wojtyla to resign."

Calvi's disclosure, therefore, had to be stopped at all cost. It was with his hanging. The deed had been carried out by the professional agents of an intelligence agency. Which, it was never discovered.

After having examined the spot where Calvi was found, the present author reached the conclusion, as did many others, that it would have been a physical impossibility for any man, a stranger to London, to have gone under the bridge four miles away, in the middle of the night, from his block of flats, (where the present author once had lived), to hang himself, as Calvi had done.

The "suicide" had been nothing less than a well executed murder. Calvi knew too much, owed too much and could disclose too much. He was sentenced to death because of it.

Meanwhile, the baffling relationship between Marcinkus and Pope Wojtyla, grew in proportion that it became increasingly incomprehensible. The more so, since Wojtyla, far from dismissing Marcinkus from the Bank, had made him practically his confidant, and almost partner.

Rumours had it, that the sharing of some dangerous secrets had linked the two men together. One of these; that Calvi and Marcinkus had given millions of dollars to the new Pope, to finance his Solidarity project in Poland. Others, said that the Vatican and the Pope had misspent most of the 1,400 missing millions, in unsavoury adventures, supported by certain freemasonic lodges, the CIA and other "undisclosed" operators.

Whatever the rumours and the truth, the fact was, that one day the Bank of Italy asked the Vatican about the whereabouts of about 450 million missing dollars of the Banco Ambrosiano, in which the Vatican Bank had been involved.

It wanted to know whether certain dummy agencies, or overseas "shell" companies, posted within and outside Europe, were connected with its Bank.

The Vatican denied involvement with any of them. It knew nothing. The affair was threatening to develop into a ponderous

scandal of unprecedented magnitude. The USA advised Marcinkus and the Pope to prudence. Confronted with documentary evidence, finally the two admitted that yes, the fraudulent "shell" companies belonged to the Vatican Bank, after all.

Pope Wojtyla, threatened by his debtors, begged the Cardinals who had elected him, to find the money he needed.

The Germans gave a lot, the richest USA dioceses, even more. Those of the Third World, only their sympathy.

In despair, then, Wojtyla made one of the most cynical moves, ever. A true masterstroke of contemporary religious chicanery.

Within the short space of 24 hours, he declared that the year 1983-84 was a Holy Year. The Romans, the Cardinals, and the faithful, were astounded. "Why?" they asked.

Pope Wojtyla then gave an answer, worthy of the sudden "sanctification" of 1983-84. "Because Christ died 1983 years ago," he explained. Forgetting to mention, that in the past, during Holy Years (every 25 years), pilgrims had flocked to Rome, not only to get indulgence, but also to drop millions of cents in St. Peter's.

1983-84, "Wojtyla's Holy Year" as it was nicknamed, was duly launched and even more duly terminated. It yielded next to nothing. A Holy Fiasco, worthy of the colossal sum which the Vatican had to pay.

The Vatican debtors were not impressed, and warned the Pope, pay or else. The Vatican, as already hinted, paid hundreds of millions, with a secret promise of more millions in the future.[4]

The risk of impending disclosures had been averted. Calvi had been "silenced" for good. Debtors had been "appeased." Solidarity had been "put on ice."

The USA, which had helped however, was not amused. Wojtyla's unsophisticated incursion into Poland had scared the USA strategists. By his unscrupulous use of his religious powers, like his ordering the Polish Bishops to by-pass the CIA's instructions, he had not only ruined the chance of a successful Solidarity emergence, as an instrument for a "gradual" destabilizing factory, he also had risked provoking an international crisis, which could have involved the USA in a serious military confrontation with

the Soviet Union.

Prior to the CIA's promotion of his election, the USA had assessed him "obdurate," "inexperienced" and "unpredictable." Since becoming Pope he had proved to be more than that; that is, a dangerous clerical bull in the delicate china shop of Soviet USA precarious political balance. Pope Wojtyla, although a docile USA creature, unless "restrained" by the USA would have led the USA into another World War.

The assessment had been shared by Washington, and by the Kremlin. Also by Cardinals.

One of these was Cardinal Benelli. Benelli twice a "potential" Pope, became concerned by the way in which Wojtyla was ruling the Church. Also by the fear of further scandals inside the Vatican. The lid upon the cauldron of the Calvi affair, could explode at any moment, revealing the infamous behaviour of certain members of the Wojtyla entourage.

The phenomenon of the curious relationship between Marcinkus and Wojtyla, for instance, had become an embarrassment, in the City of London and Wall Street. Speculation as to the true nature of their partnership produced the belief that the two men had participated in mysterious operations. Also that both were operating as super-agents of the USA.

These rumours, of course, were mere speculations. Yet, their persistency made the Vatican a centre of villainy. When finally Italy warned the Pope that if Marcinkus stepped out of the Vatican walls, he would be arrested and imprisoned, and Pope Wojtyla had not even bothered to answer, then the villainous image of the Wojtyla papacy was given substance. The more so, since Marcinkus remained under his open protection. Indeed, Pope Wojtyla, far from removing him, had confirmed Marcinkus as Director of the Vatican Bank, with more amplitude than ever before.

Many in Rome asked once more what the bonds between the two men could be. Rumours were varied and weird. They were not only of a financial or even political kind, it was said, they must have been of a more sinister nature. Such as the rigging of the conclave which had elected Wojtyla as Pope? Or, indeed, even with the "unexplained" demise of the Venetian Pope?

Such rumours, of course, were never substantiated. But the mere fact that, although baseless, they persisted, demonstrated what the strange papal protection of Marcinkus was doing to the image of the Vatican.

Cardinal Benelli became increasingly concerned, in so far that all his efforts to persuade the Pope to do something positive about it had come to naught.

Benelli's determination to have Marcinkus removed from the Vatican Bank began to worry certain individuals within and outside Rome. Heading these were those in the high echelons of the influential Masonic Lodge, better known as Lodge P2.

The Lodge members were reputedly operating in the highest positions, in the political and criminal worlds. The two "God's Bankers," Sindona and Calvi, had been Lodge members, as had many Cardinals.

The operations of the Lodge P2 had trespassed from the financial into the ideological and even into the intelligence fields. They had co-involved the Ambrosiano and the Vatican Banks, and even the CIA.

Thanks to their secretiveness, any opposition against the Lodge could become suicidal.

The activities of Cardinal Benelli and his co-partner, Cardinal Felici, drew their perillous attention. The two Cardinals, however, continued to collate evidence about the Lodge, the Vatican and the CIA and their secret relationships with Calvi.

Their evidence went from the ambiguously trivial to the dramatic. Amongst this was the warning which the CIA had given to Cardinal Villot, when he was still Secretary of State, to the effect that the Vatican had been "bugged." This was substantiated by a memo which Villot had written, before his death, 25.9.81.

In the memo, Villot gave clear instructions that, in the future, conclaves should be "electronically" immunized; a reaction to the fact that the last ones had been bugged.(5)

It was rumoured that the American Cardinals had used a two-way communication miniature computer.(5)

Benelli, who had had ample experience with both the CIA and the KGB, continued to dig out additional damning evidence

against the current and past activities of the Vatican Bank, and its associates. Prominent amongst these were his disclosures that the Vatican Bank had been manipulating, not only a few hundred million, but more than two billion dollars. Also, that Pope Wojtyla, according to him, had received between seven and eight million dollars from the Vatican Bank itself, for personal allocation. Whatever that had meant.

But even more dangerous, Benelli's investigations confirmed the part which the CIA had played in the manipulation of Solidarity; no less than the Vatican's dealings with Lodge P2. Also the personal implication in all this of Marcinkus and, indeed, of the Pope himself.

Benelli never accused directly Pope Wojtyla of any specific misdeed. However, he hinted that the Pope's reluctance, in removing Marcinkus, indicated something unwholesome in the Pope's relationship with him.

Therefore, why not clarify the situation, once and for all? Or had the Pope truly been involved in secret activities, which could have compromised the Church? Would such activities, stain the papacy had they been disclosed? Why the secrecy?

Pope Wojtyla, however, continued to keep his silence.

The papal stubbornness made other Cardinals uneasy. Some joined Benelli. Cardinal Rossi of Brazil, for instance, went so far as to bluntly ask the Pope to dismiss Marcinkus.

Cardinal Rossi was no mean prelate. He was the head of the most prestigious Vatican congregation—Perfect of Propaganda Fide. And even more significant, he had been one of the "five official investigators" of the special commission, which had been charged with looking into the secret financial operations of the Ambrosiano and Vatican Banks. He had "officially" assessed Marcinkus, with his other colleagues, and they had found him wanting.

Several other Cardinals supported Rossi. Many, however, while criticizing Wojtyla in private, kept their silence in public, not to worsen the situation.

Cardinal Benelli, however, far from being intimidated, after Calvi had been found dead in London, resumed his campaign more vigorously than before. He warned the Pope that Calvi's

death had been but the tip of an iceberg. The iceberg was bound to emerge in due course, with disastrous results for the Church.

Pope Wojtyla, however, again stubbornly ignored his warning. He even made it know that Benelli's probings were irksome and unwelcome.

Benelli, thereupon, decided to ask the support of some Cardinals who thought like him. He flew to Brazil, where he discussed with them ways and means via which to compel the Pope to get rid of the Director of the Vatican Bank, and of his associates.

While at Rio de Janeiro airport, on his return to Rome, Cardinal Benelli was asked about the Marcinkus problem. Why did Benelli want Marcinkus sacked? Marcinkus, after all, had been the Director of the Vatican Bank since 1969. He should be left where he had always been.

Benelli, who had listened with visible impatience, gave a snappy response, "In the Church," he had replied, "no one fills a place for ever."

When another newsman remarked that Marcinkus could not possibly be removed, because he had a most powerful protector, namely because he was a personal friend of the Pope, the Cardinal had become even blunter. "The fact that Marcinkus is a friend of the Pope," he rebutted, "does not mean that he has to remain in the post."

The Cardinal became relentlessly determined to have the mystery of the missing millions clarified for "the good name of the Church." "The forces active behind them had to be exposed, whether within or outside the Vatican," he explained. In private, he even hinted at their potential identification. Friends advised caution. They reminded him that certain inexplicable deaths had occurred before, during and after that of Calvi's. Benelli, however, a forceful personality, insisted that since the IOR's liability had been well established, it was high time that those who had been responsible for it be exposed.

When reminded that Marcinkus had powerful protectors, more powerful perhaps than the Cardinal had ever envisaged, Benelli indicated that other no less powerful forces would be at work behind the scenes on his behalf. "In fact, I do not exclude that Marcinkus will be forced to resign his post before the end of

the year," he then declared.[6]

A daring prediction. And even more, a perilous challenge. A few weeks later, Cardinal Benelli, the keeper of the Vatican's most recondite secrets, suffered a deadly "heart attack," and died October 26th, 1982. He was only 61 years old.

The tragedy had become even more poignantly intimidating, by another additional sudden death. Cardinal Felici, the indefatigable supporter and Benelli's friend, had also died within weeks.

Many could not help thinking that their "demises," specially that of the fearless Benelli, the man who had missed being elected Pope by a mere five votes, had not been mere "coincidences."

"Could it be," it was asked, "that the sudden disappearance of the two potential scandal bursters, had something to do with the great enigma of the Wojtyla pontificate?" And even more important, that if the enigma had been elucidated, further enigmas of a far more dramatic import, might have come to the fore, to an astounded and incredulous world?

Cardinal Benelli and Cardinal Felici, who had died so suddenly, within a brief interval of each other, had carried the secret to their graves, finally and forever.[7]

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(1) See the author's *The Vatican Billions*, Chick Publications, P. O. Box 662, Chino, CA 91710.
(2) Idem
(3) See *The United Nations' World Magazine*, December 1952.
(4) *The Vatican Billions.*
(5) The Vatican had been "given ears" during the last two conclaves, as had the walls of the Russian Embassy in Washington, thanks to which the Embassy could listen to the goings on of other buildings in the capital. The USA Embassy in Moscow had also been bugged in the same manner.
(6) *El Periodico*, October 29, 1982, Barcelona, Spain.
(7) The following spring Marcinkus headed the list of the 18 new Cardinals, who were elected in February 1983. Senior Cardinals protested and Pope Wojtyla had to withdraw Marcinkus' candidacy. Pope Wojtyla tried again in 1985, when Marcinkus was a prisoner in the Vatican and under the threat of instant arrest and jail, from Italy. Once more Wojtyla had to withdraw Marcinkus' candidature.

Chapter Forty-two

The prisoner of Vatican City. His secret links with Pope Wojtyla. The Pope is forbidden to make him a Cardinal. The Vatican has to pay 300 million dollar debts. The continuation of the USA Vatican joint policies in Eastern Europe and Central America. The USA recognizes the Pope after one hundred years. The far reaching significance for America. The power of the Papal Nuncio. Paramountcy of the election of a Pope. Its importance for world politics. Justification for the intrigues of past and future papal elections.

One year after the death of Cardinal Benelli, in 1983, there took place in Rome a Consistory. John Paul put Marcinkus at the head of the list of new Cardinals he had previously indicated he was going to create.

The announcement provoked an immediate adverse reaction, in the Curia and outside the Vatican. Also within the intelligence apparati of the USA. Pope John Paul II was told to withdraw Marcinkus from the list. And for good.

Pope Wojtyla had to obey. When two years later, at the Consistory of May 1985, he created 28 more new Cardinals, the name of Marcinkus had been conspicuously absent.

Marcinkus, however, although not a Cardinal, continued to exert the influence of one. He had remained very close to the Pope. In fact, he had become closer to him than ever before. This, it was said, had been due to several factors.

The first of these, Marcinkus had become a prisoner. His jail, Vatican City. Had he set foot outside it, he would have been arrested by the Italian police.

The following year, 1984, as already hinted, his former partner, Michele Sindona, was extradited to Italy, brought before an Italian court and sentenced to a further 14 years for additional

financial imbroglios, when Patriarch Luciani's bank had been "stolen" from him, by the trio, formed by the two Godfathers, Sindona and Calvi, and by the American Bishop, as mentioned before.

The issue of the faked bonds, back in the seventies, when Marcinkus had been investigated "in secret" by the Federal Government, had not been forgotten. It had been resurrected by the scandal of the Ambrosiano Bank and the murder of its Director, Roberto Calvi.

Cardinal Benelli and his friends had wanted to have the whole problem clarified, to absolve the Church from the accusations that she had been involved in prolonged frauds, spanning the years. He had never personally accused Marcinkus of criminal activities. He had wanted him to justify his conduct and association with Sindona-Calvi and Lodge P2. Also, he had wished to know where the 1,400 million dollars had gone.

When, in 1984-5, the Vatican finally had to pay 300 million as a form of "indemnity" to some of the Vatican Bank creditors, the issue, far from having been closed, remained very much alive in Italy, in London, in Switzerland and in Washington.

The self-imprisonment of Marcinkus seemed justified. What had appeared not justified, however, had been Pope Wojtyla's protection; indeed, his close personal friendship with him. The excuse of clerical loyalty had been insufficient to explain the link between the two men.

Pope Wojtyla's "protectino" had consolidated into a monolithic papal wall, behind which Marcinkus had become immune from indictment, prosecution and arrest.

And even more inexplicable, was his influence upon the Pope. This, far from diminishing, had remained disproportionate to his ecclesiastic rank. It had become a major factor in the intimate circles of Pope Wojtyla. Rumours abounded as to what might have caused the phenomenon. The most widespread and accepted was that the two men had shared certain secrets, dealing with past intelligence operations, connected with the two previous conclaves, with the "demise" of John Paul I, with the financial imbroglio of the Vatican Bank, with the latter's lending of millions to Solidarity, the joint Vatican USA ventures in Poland,

and other "subversive" schemes, against Russia, in Eastern Europe.

The Consistory of May 1985 had indicated that John Paul II was pursuing the clandestine USA-Eastern Europe as actively as ever, although with more circumspection.

The Consistory had indicated that the Vatican-Washington Alliance was in full swing; also in Latin America, and was proceeding according to plans. There, while President Reagan was campaigning for the suppression of Marxist administrations, via money and troops, the Pope had been helping him with the suppression of Liberation Theology.

Jesuits in office were told by him to quit their posts, or face excommunication. The most prominent of them, Fr. Fernando Cardenal and Fr. Ernesto and Miguel D'Escoto, serving as ministers in Nicaragua's Sandinista Government, refused, as did many others. (15.8.84)

The USA and the Vatican had started to discipline Central and Latin America, as full partners. The combining and timing of their efforts had been discussed and agreed upon the previous year when, on 2nd May 1984, Pope John Paul II and President Reagan met at an international crossroads in Alaska, where the President and Pope "talked privately" for more than 20 minutes.

The following year, in May 1985, after having been battered by Congress, which had denied him millions of dollars to combat Marxist Nicaragua, he triumphantly declared that John Paul II was supporting his policies there. "Pope John Paul II, supports all our activities in Central America," he said.[1] The Vatican denied Reagan's affirmation, although Reagan had told the truth.[2]

The Vatican Washington Alliance had been formalized by a veritable political marriage, only shortly before. In 1984, in fact, President Reagan by-passed the USA Constitution and granted special ambassadorial status to the Vatican.

The operation had been conducted by secret negotiation, between the President and the Pope. The sudden announcement took America by surprise. At one stroke, the USA had placed the Catholic Church above all other Christian denominations throughout the USA, putting the Vatican on a par with the USA,

and the Pope on a par with the USA President.

The result of such USA-Vatican parity process, had been the culmination of decades of secretive operations within the inner wheel of the American administration itself.

During World War II, in July 1944, for instance, Pope Pius XII decorated General William Donovan with the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Sylvester, a reward given only to 100 other men, "who by outstanding deed...championed the Church."

The significance of the reward was in the fact that Donovan had served as a chief of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA. Early in the war, in 1941, Donovan had already forged an alliance with the founder of a Catholic intelligence agency, called Pro Deo. The two agencies collaborated during and after the war, to such an extent that eventually they amalgamated.

This resulted in the de facto integration of the CIA and of the Vatican intelligence, into a global USA-Vatican apparatus, whose operations now encompassed the globe.

The amalgamation operated in favour of the advancement of the Catholic Church in the political fields, at home and abroad. And indeed, in joint USA-Vatican promotion of their respective objectives.

It helped in the promotion of Presidential candidates in the USA, and in the promotion of potential papal candidates in the Vatican. The Vatican-CIA spying operations have assessed both Presidents and Popes, during the past three decades, and acted accordingly. For instance, they considered Pope John XIII "politically naive," Pope Paul VI "dangerous," Pope John Paul I "a costly mistake." They selected Pope John Paul II as a valuable "instrument for the prosecution of joint USA-Vatican global policies."

The secretive USA-Vatican collaboration, furthermore, had been made possible by the fact that prominent officials of the USA government were also prominent Catholics, who integrated the interests of the USA with those of the Catholic Church, and vice versa. The process was culminated during the first and second terms of the Reagan administration. To mention only a few in key posts: George Schultz, Secretary of State; Donald Regan,

Chief of Staff of the White House; Robert McFarlane, National Security Adviser; and William Casey, Director of the CIA. The four most powerful men, second only to the President himself.

The secretive quasi amalgamation of the USA with the Vatican intelligence eventually was to be officially sanctioned with the Vatican-USA diplomatic exchange of Ambassadors, in 1984.

The Vatican Ambassador became a religious and political influence within the very heart of the USA Government.

Far from being a rhetorical exaggeration, this is a harsh reality, since it is due to the influence which the Nuncio can exert, in Washington where he is the most powerful of all the diplomats.

The Papal Nuncio has at his command the battalions of USA Catholics. A word from him will alter the moral and even political attitudes of 60 million of them, be they Democrats or Republicans. Because of this, both parties must be very attentive to the reaction of the Papal Nuncio, who represents, it must be remembered, the Pope in Rome.

Because of his power the Nuncio, therefore, can affect the policies of the USA, both in the domestic and external fields. The more so, since the Nuncio has at his disposal a most formidable machinery: the administration, ecclesiastic discipline and immense wealth of the Catholic Church of America.

The Catholic Church in the USA, financially can stand up to all the giant trusts of America. Politically she looms ever larger in the White House, in the Senate and in Congress. She is a force in the Pentagon, a secret agent in the FBI and the most subtly intangible prime mover of the S.S. wheel within a wheel; the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Papal Nuncio is potentially a most dangerous diplomat. Since, should the USA oppose the Pope's domestic or foreign policies, he can mobilize 60 million American Catholics against the USA itself.

As long as the USA Administration cooperates with the Pope, all is well. Should it, however, diverge from that of the Vatican, then the Nuncio can put pressure upon millions of otherwise loyal American Catholics. Indeed, he could force them to support or to oppose any given USA domestic or external opera-

tion, with the approval or disapproval of the Vatican.

The USA-Vatican exchange of Ambassadors, therefore, made of the USA a formal partner of a church, whose ultimate objective is the total conversion of the USA into a Catholic republic.

This objective is as logical as that of the USA to maintain USA hegemony and way of life in the Western Hemisphere, or that of the Soviet Union to remain the Mecca of Soviet territorial expansionism and of World Communism.

Each of the three superpowers entertains visions of their own. The USA has allied itself with the Vatican, to use the Catholic Church as a global ideological religious partner. The Vatican has allied itself with the USA, to exploit the formidable economic and military power of America into an irresistible instrument of Catholic expansionism, within and outside the USA herself.

Hence the Vatican eagerness to render the USA her secular lay partner. Vatican policies have fluctuated in accordance with the fortunes of Europe, those of Soviet Russia and those of the USA.

While America has been consistent in her opposition to Soviet Russia and World Communism, the Vatican flirted with both. Thus, when America was opposing the birth of Soviet Bolshevism, the Pope was secretly dealing with Lenin.[3] When it was opposing the rise of Fascism in Europe, the Vatican supported Fascism.[4] When Nazism was smashed, and the Soviet Union became the new menace, the Vatican allied itself with the USA, and produced the Vatican Washington Alliance, which culminated with the Cold War (1944-1958). With the election of a new Pope, Pope John XXIII, it flirted again with the Soviets. With Paul VI it formed the Vatican Moscow Alliance, abandoning the Vatican Washington one.

The alternation of the alliances depended on who was ruling the Vatican. The importance of a Pope, therefore, was paramount. Hence the incredible intrigues, lobbying and machinations which took place, before and after, at the election of each new Pope.

Because of that, the election of a new Pope, from the political stance, transcends in importance the election of an American President. And even of a top change in the Kremlin. Since the

election of a new Pope will affect the religious, ecclesiastic and intelligence operations of the Catholic Church worldwide.

Thanks to such global influence, a new Pope, by creating, dissolving or neutralizing alliances, can balance or unbalance world equilibrium. The support or opposition of a Pope, therefore, is of vital concern to any major group of nations. Thanks to the fact, that mankind today has become global minded, the influence of the Catholic Church has become global. That spells the reality that her influence can encompass, besides the Christian regions, also the Islamic, Hinduist, Buddhist ones, all over the earth.

Because of that, the Vatican, or rather the current monarchical conception of the papacy, has become a world superpower, and it is treated as one.

As a result, the Pope is a world potentate. The paramountcy of his policies, consequently, must be taken with the same gravity as with those formulated by the USA and by Soviet Russia.

Hence their interest at each election of a new Pope. Hence all their intrigues to influence his nomination. Hence all their multifarious cabalas behind the scenes. Hence the mysterious intimations of the conclaves. Hence the mystical rituals of the balloting of the papal candidates. Hence their risky operations carried out by their intelligence apparati. Hence the dramatic competition between the USA and the Soviet Union for the promotion of "their man." Indeed, hence, their refraining from nothing, not even from crimes and murder. Hence the suspicious deaths of Bishops, Cardinals, papal candidates and even of Popes.

When seen in this light, therefore, what at the beginning of this book had appeared as specious assumptions, doubtful speculations, suspicious evidence, or even dubious data, by now should have become not only plausible, but also acceptable.

Indeed, inevitable, in view of the fact that the most stunning events described in this work, have all occurred.

They happened in the recent past. It will be so even more, in the near and in the distant future.

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(1) See also *Daily Mail* 27.4.85. *The Universe* 26.4.85.

(2) Archbishop J. Hickey of the USA Conference called the USA aid to the "contras," illegal and immoral.

(3) The Vatican negotiated secretly with Lenin in 1921-22 via Livtinoff, Foreign Secretary of State, in Genoa, Italy.
(4) See the author's *The Vatican in World Politics, Vatican Imperialism in the 20th Century* and *The Vatican Moscow Washington Alliance.*

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